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**Smugglers and State-Builders: Opiate Trafficking and Institutional
Development in Interwar Egypt and Turkey**

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**Smugglers and State-Builders: Opiate Trafficking and Institutional
Development in Interwar Egypt and Turkey**

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Abstract

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During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Turkey and Egypt constituted the world's largest producer and consumer of opiates respectively. Throughout this period, tons of heroin and morphine flowed across the Eastern Mediterranean, triggering an unprecedented epidemic that swept through Egypt and claimed nearly four percent of the country's population as addicts. However, the immense impact of the interwar opiate trade and epidemic on the societies, economies, and institutions of interwar Turkey and Egypt remains largely absent from Middle Eastern historiography.

Drawing on Egyptian and Turkish state records, memoirs, and periodicals, this research incorporates the complex networks of opiate traffickers, distributors, consumers, law enforcement agents, bureaucrats, and diplomats into the narrative of regional history. It contends that Egyptians, by participating in the opiate trade, formed profitable

networks that helped relieve local economic pressures resulting from the Great Depression, which devastated the national cotton economy and, with it, the Egyptian middle class. While the interwar opiate trade generated considerable illicit economic activity, government responses to the epidemic created opportunities for local bureaucrats and politicians to overcome the stringent fiscal austerity of the semi-colonial Egyptian state, build enforcement institutions like the Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, and provide public health services such as drug treatment. Simultaneously, Egyptian journalists and diplomats responded to the epidemic by contributing to a growing tide of international diplomatic, economic, and popular pressure that prevailed upon Turkey to introduce narcotics regulation in the early 1930s. Turkey's subsequent move to regulate the opiate industry by creating the Narcotic Substances Monopoly transformed this illicit trade into a major source of government revenue that fueled an emerging program of statist development.

Tracing the trajectory of opiates from Turkey to Egypt demonstrates unconventional role of narcotics in both countries' processes of state-building and complicates the traditional conception of commodities as simply a source of funds for development. On the contrary, this framework presents the sale *and* suppression of substances as engines of state development and democratizes study of state formation by exposing the diverse cast of historical actors who fueled both the commerce and regulation of opiates in interwar Turkey and Egypt.

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List of Abbreviations

BCA	Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Turkish Republic Prime Ministry Archive)
CNIB	Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau (Egypt)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
FBN	Federal Narcotics Bureau
OAC	Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drugs or Opium Advisory Committee (League of Nations)
S.İ.M.	Sihhat ve İctimai Muavenet Vekâleti (Turkish Health and Social Assistance Ministry)
U.M.İ.	Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Uyuşturucu Maddeler İnhisarı (Turkish Republic Narcotic Substances Monopoly)

Introduction

On April 16, 1938, destitute and pregnant with three children and a bedridden spouse to support, Maria Vescia donned the habit, veil, and crucifix of a Franciscan nun and boarded the S.S. “Marco Polo” along with three other piously dressed accomplices. Aboard the ship, which arrived at the Egyptian port of Alexandria that morning, the group proceeded to the baggage claim where they received a large suitcase and the key to a first-class cabin. Once inside the cabin, Maria and her accomplices quickly removed over twelve kilograms of opiates from the bag and strapped the drugs to their bodies using meters of surgical gauze bandages before exiting the ship with the contraband neatly concealed under their religious vestments. However, as they stepped off ship’s gangway and into the port, Egyptian Customs officials descended on the traffickers and detained all four members of the group, as well as an actual nun who, coincidentally, disembarked from the vessel moments later.¹

The exploits of the “pseudo priests and nuns,” as the Egyptian press dubbed the traffickers, provide an intimate glimpse into the profitable and pervasive, yet scarcely studied, opiate trade that spanned the Eastern Mediterranean during the interwar period.² Turkey and Egypt constituted the two primary participants in this trade. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, these countries emerged from devastating conflict, economic crisis, and foreign occupation as the world’s largest producer and consumer of opiates respectively. Throughout this period, the nascent Turkish Republic grew into the global epicenter of the illicit opiate trade and manufactures in Istanbul alone refined approximately twelve tons of heroin and morphine

¹ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1938* (Cairo: The Bureau, Cairo : The Bureau), 28-33.

² Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1938*, 28-33.

annually.³ As these drugs diffused across the Eastern Mediterranean and into the semi-colonial state of Egypt, they precipitated an opiate epidemic that state authorities estimated to have reached nearly four percent of the county's population.⁴ The opiate trade and ensuing epidemic, in short, had an immense impact on the societies, economies, and institutions of interwar Turkey and Egypt.



Figure 7: The “pseudo priests and nuns” pictured in their disguises. Maria Vescia (L).⁵

³ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, IX and 20.

⁴ For Egyptian addiction figures see Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1929*, 31.

⁵ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1938*, 28-33

From cultivation to consumption, the interwar opiate trade spanned social strata and permeated the borders of newly established nation states throughout the region. For Egyptians, the trade constituted a source of social problems as well as economic and political opportunities. By promoting the opiate trade, Egyptian traffickers and dealers mitigated the negative economic impacts of the Great Depression in their country. Similarly, the efforts of Egyptian politicians and bureaucrats to police the ensuing epidemic strengthened their position in negotiations with the colonial administrators in the Egyptian state, which allowed them to develop enforcement agencies and build public health institutions. However, the opiate trade also had profound transnational ramifications. In response to these epidemic, Egyptian politicians, bureaucrats, and journalists contributed to a growing tide of international diplomatic, economic, and popular pressure that eventually prevailed upon Turkey to introduce a narcotics control regime in the early 1930s. Turkey's subsequent move to regulate and monopolize its lucrative domestic opiate industry had transformative effects on the trade and fueled an emerging program of statist economic policy that, as the opiate epidemic in Egypt, helped Turkey respond to the to the adverse economic impacts of the Great Depression.

Tracing the transnational trajectory of opiates from Turkey to Egypt illustrates the important, yet unconventional, role that narcotics played in both countries' processes of state development during the interwar period. In Egypt, control and mitigation of the opiate trade and the attendant epidemic justified investments in public security and health that allowed local officials to pursue programs of institutional development and 'Egyptianization' despite great economic and political constraints. Likewise, Turkey's move to regulate narcotics manufacturing allowed the government to monopolize its domestic opiate trade and provided the country with a steady stream of revenue during a period of statist economic expansion. The nuanced

relationship between narcotics and nation-building in both countries complicates the traditionally straightforward conception of commodities, like narcotics, as simply a source of funds for development. Instead, this model presents both the commerce *and* regulation of narcotics as engines of state development. As a diverse cast of historical actors fueled these engines, the following research democratizes the study of nation-building in interwar Egypt and Turkey, indicating drug traffickers as well as politicians in a bottom-up process of state development.

The Interwar Opiate Trade and Middle Eastern Historiography

Despite the significant role that the interwar opiate trade and epidemic played in the complex process of Egyptian and Turkish state development, both remain largely absent from modern Middle Eastern historiography due to two factors. First, histories of narcotics trafficking and drug diplomacy tend to focus on Europeans and Americans (for whom exists a rich evidentiary base) to the detriment of regional actors. Second, the analytical ascendance of the nation-state paradigm generally discourages scholars from examining the transnational connections between different states and arbitrarily restricts or altogether fails to capture the narratives of individuals who do not fit cleanly in this single polity framework. Understanding and incorporating the narratives of Egyptians and Turks into a transnational history of the interwar opiate trade and epidemic not only brings together previously compartmentalized areas and demographics, but also historiographies.

Egyptians and Turks in the Interwar Opiate Trade

While a few global histories of drugs and narcotics address the impact of the interwar opiate trade and epidemic in Turkey and Egypt, they largely attribute narcotics trafficking and control to external forces. In the case of Egypt, rather than focusing on Egyptian opiate

traffickers, dealers, and consumers, these histories construct a narrative of shadowy foreign (usually European) smugglers who manipulated centuries old Ottoman capitulatory agreements to circumvent the Egyptian legal system and engage in the illicit narcotics trade.⁶ Likewise, their accounts of government responses to the epidemic largely ignore the actions of Egyptian police, bureaucrats, and politicians in favor of the British civil servants who worked on behalf of the semi-colonial Egyptian state.⁷ Although foreign actors and legal structures undoubtedly shaped Egypt's interwar opiate trade, emphasizing the foreignness of these substances neglects the influence that Egyptians themselves exerted over the country's illicit opiate economy. During this period, Egyptian smugglers, merchants, dealers, and consumers played the dominant role in disseminating opiates throughout the country, which left local government officials, police officers, and the emerging professional class (*al-effendiyyah*) scrambling to address the ensuing epidemic.⁸

Focusing on Egyptians demonstrates that, even though the interwar opiate economy fueled myriad social problems in Egypt, it also created economic and political opportunities. Egyptians, by participating in the opiate trade, formed profitable networks that helped them relieve local economic pressures resulting from the Great Depression, which devastated the national cotton economy and, with it, the Egyptian middle class. While the interwar opiate trade generated considerable illicit economic activity, the government response to the subsequent

⁶ The capitulations granted extra-territorial rights to some foreign communities. See Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beraths in the 18th Century*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society, v. 21 (Leiden [The Netherlands]; Boston: Brill, 2005).

⁷ R. P. T. Davenport-Hines' account of the epidemic, for example, details Russell Pasha's efforts to catch and prosecute predominantly European traffickers. R. P. T. Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A History of Narcotics* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001).

⁸ This keen attention to the roles that Egyptians played in the interwar opiate epidemic reflects recent trends in the social history of drugs and narcotics emphasizing the ways in which local consumers, dealers, and officials shaped markets for narcotic substances. See Liat Kozma, "White Drugs in Interwar Egypt: Decadent Pleasures, Emaciated Fellahin, and the Campaign against Drugs," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 1 (2013). James H. Mills and Patricia Barton, eds., *Drugs and Empires: Essays in Modern Imperialism and Intoxication, c. 1500-c. 1930* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

epidemic enabled Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians to overcome the stringent fiscal austerity of the semi-colonial Egyptian state, build enforcement institutions like the Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau (CNIB), and provide public health services for treating drug addiction. Although inherently at odds, these local criminal networks and newly established government institutions grew symbiotically and together influenced the trajectory of Egyptian state development in the early twentieth century.

As with the historiography of the Egyptian trade and epidemic, only a small number of histories address the implications of the lucrative opiate industry for early Republican Turkey. This literature, which generally approaches the opiate trade from the vantage of international drug diplomacy, tends to focus on the interplay between select high-level European and American policymakers who attended drug control conferences and negotiated narcotics regulation treaties during the early–mid twentieth century.⁹ In so, these works provide valuable insight into the connections between shifts in Turkish drug regulation policies and broader trends in global narcotics control. However, their wide geographic scope overlooks the important regional actors and events that shaped Turkey’s opiate industry during the interwar era.

Although the United States, Canada, and Western European countries featured prominently in multilateral narcotics control negotiations with Turkey during the interwar period, they alone did not create the country’s drug policy. As the largest regional consumer of narcotics and the site of an unprecedented opiate epidemic, Egypt played a significant role in the sustained diplomatic, economic, and popular media campaign that resulted in the creation of Turkey’s

⁹ For example, William B. McAllister’s *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* uses Turkey’s opiate industry as a backdrop for, what he considers, the failures of multilateral narcotics control negotiations in during the 1900s. William B. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000). Ryan Gingeras’ *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey*, which employs the opiate trade as vehicle to study the history of connections between local as well as international crime syndicates and the Turkish government, marks a notable exception to this trend. Ryan Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

narcotics regulation regime of the early 1930s. Similarly, even though traffickers, dealers, and addicts largely fueled the interwar opiate trade, other demographics also engaged in this lucrative industry. Narcotics regulation in Turkey consolidated the country's illicit opiate industry under the Turkish Republic Narcotic Substances Monopoly (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Uyuşturucu Maddeler İhisarı or U.M.İ.), which allowed Turkish bureaucrats and politicians to appropriate the drug trade and use its vast profits to pursue institutional development along the lines of the country's emerging program of etatism.

The Nation-State Paradigm and the Interwar Opiate Trade

While the tendency among historians to emphasize the roles of Europeans has marginalized the impact of Turks and Egyptians on the interwar opiate trade and epidemic, reliance on the nation-state as an analytical framework has obscured the important transnational connections between these countries. Modern Middle Eastern historiography largely compartmentalizes the study of the interwar Eastern Mediterranean into nascent nation states and European mandates. In the aftermath of World War I, many scholars argue, new political entities erected borders that destroyed or fundamentally reconfigured regional economic and social relations.¹⁰

Modern Middle Eastern historians attribute the interwar compartmentalization paradigm to various sources. Şükrü Hanioğlu, for example, traces this trend to the teleologically driven narratives of twentieth century nationalist historians who viewed ethnic and national divisions as innate and, therefore, envisioned history as an inevitable march toward the rise of nation states.¹¹ Hanioğlu's *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, which singles out nationalist teleology

¹⁰ This paradigm appears throughout the otherwise conceptually rigorous work of the late Ottoman economic and labor historian Donald Quataert. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, New Approaches to European History (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127.

¹¹ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-2.

as “a major obstacle” to contemporary regional historical scholarship, notes that it “distorts key historical processes by pulling them out of their historical context and placing them in a contrived chain of events leading up to the familiar post-imperial world.”¹² Additionally, Hasan Kayalı argues that partitioning the field of modern Middle Eastern history among Arabists and Ottomanists (to name a few branches) has created an academic division of labor that has further exacerbates the interwar compartmentalization paradigm.¹³ Likewise, in his paper on smuggling in the post-Ottoman Levant titled “The Many Worlds of ‘Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization,” Cyrus Schayegh laments that drug traffickers and other “[i]ndividuals who regularly cross borders fall through the cracks of new nation-state analytical frameworks or are summarily integrated into them.”¹⁴ As Hanioglu, Kayalı, and Schayegh demonstrate, the impact of examining the modern Middle East—its territory, peoples, and archives—through the nation state framework has fostered significant gaps in region scholarship and, in particular, the study of transnational illicit activities like the interwar opiate trade between Turkey and Egypt.

Regional Historiographies and the Interwar Opiate Trade

In using the narratives of Egyptians and Turks to construct a transnational history of the interwar Eastern Mediterranean opiate trade, this research engages, connects, and informs a number of regional historiographies. First, both Egyptian and Turkish accounts of the interwar opiate trade contribute to the regional history of the Great Depression. As economic historian Şevket Pamuk notes in *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century*:

¹² Hanioglu, *Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 1.

¹³ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 10.

¹⁴ Cyrus Schayegh, “The Many Worlds of ‘Abud Yasin; Or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 274.

The period from 1918-1945 was exceptionally difficult for the society and economy of Turkey. Before the country could fully recover from the devastation of a decade of war which brought about the end of the Ottoman Empire and led to the emergence of a new nation state, it was hit by the Great Depression and the collapse of the world market for agricultural commodities.¹⁵

Building on Pamuk sketch of interwar Turkey, this history shows that during this “exceptionally difficult” period Turkey emerged as the world’s foremost purveyor of opiates and the source of the majority of narcotics consumed in Egypt.¹⁶ Similarly, the years following the 1929 economic crisis marked a period of intense economic strain in Egypt that triggered increased rates of poverty, political radicalization, and, according to Lucie Ryzova’s *The Age of the Efendiyya*, led the country’s middle class to “question the very foundations of the regime.”¹⁷ As the history of the interwar drug trade and epidemic suggests, these conditions also led thousands of Egyptians, from peasants to politicians, to turn to the opiate economy for financial and political opportunities.

Second, the opiate trade sheds light on processes of state development in interwar Egypt and Turkey. Although Egypt gained increased autonomy during the interwar period, it still faced de-facto British dominance and, as Beth Baron demonstrates in *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*, witnessed intense competition between foreign missionaries, Muslim activists, and the state over the country’s social welfare system.¹⁸ The history of the Egyptian opiate epidemic shows how public security and health concerns, such as drug trafficking and consumption, played into the process of institutional development

¹⁵Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 10.

¹⁶ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, IX and 20.

¹⁷ For increased poverty rates and political radicalization see: Owen and Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century*, 39. M. W. Daly and Carl F. Petry, eds., *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 328. Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (OUP Oxford, 2014), 243.

¹⁸ Daly and Petry, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 285-308 and Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Stanford University Press, 2014), 8

by providing leverage for local bureaucrats and politicians in the negotiations with the semi-colonial Egyptian state. Likewise, Turkey embarked on a path of statism during the early 1930s in response to years of unfavorable economic growth and poor global market conditions.¹⁹ The Egyptian opiate epidemic and the wave of diplomatic and media pressure that followed contributed to a sustained international drug control campaign that forced Turkey to establish an official government narcotics monopoly, which embodied and likely funded further development of the country's state-owned industries and institutions.

Third, the opiate trade provides a window into foreign relations between Turkey and Egypt during the interwar period. While various studies examine early Republican Turkey's diplomatic overtures to Europe (in particular Britain and France) and the Soviet Union, a dearth of scholarship exists on the country's early foreign relations with the Arab world.²⁰ Moreover, as Fred Lawson demonstrates in his article titled "Reassessing Egypt's Foreign Policy during the 1920s and 1930s," although Egyptian government officials and politicians actively engaged in diplomacy during this period, "[e]xisting scholarship asserts that political leaders in Cairo exhibited little if any interest in diplomatic and strategic relations with surrounding states prior to the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance in August 1936."²¹ Similar to Lawson's conclusions, the actions of the CNIB, Egyptian diplomats, politicians, and the journalists demonstrate a keen interest and knowledge of foreign affairs. Likewise, rather than showing disregard for the Arab world, Turkish government documents exhibit Ankara's great concern about events in Cairo as well as the actions and statements of Egyptian diplomats and journalists.

¹⁹ Owen and Pamuk, 18-20.

²⁰ See William M. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774* (Routledge, 2013).

²¹ Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni, *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952* (American Univ in Cairo Press, 2005), 46.

Taken together, the intersection of the opiate trade and these historiographies comments on the overarching narratives of interwar Egypt and Turkey. In Egypt, the period roughly corresponds with the beginning of what historians refer to as the “Liberal Era” of constitutional monarchy, which existed between the 1919 Egyptian revolution and the 1952 Free Officers’ Coup. Although post-coup nationalist historiographies often dismiss this period as a “liberal experiment,” Barak Salmoni and Amy Johnson argue that it “exhibits a cultural vibrancy, societal dynamism, and intellectual political legacy” in their edited series on the period, *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*.²² Despite the immense social problems that the interwar opiate trade and epidemic created, the ability of Egyptians, from peasants to politicians, to seize upon these phenomena for economic and political gain concurs with Salmoni and Johnson’s assessment.

Turkish historiography reflects a similar lack of consensus about the country’s early Republican era. As Feroz Ahmad reflects in his essay, “Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey,” historians still fiercely debate the extent to which the founding of the Turkish Republic represents continuity or change.²³ On one hand, the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, and other high-ranking republican officials emerged as products of the Ottoman system. On the other, Turkey dramatically transformed from an Islamic Empire into a secular nation-state during this period. Turkey’s approach to the interwar opiate trade and the epidemic in Egypt suggests a combination of both theories. As the Ottoman State, the country continued to engage in the opiate trade, established an official government narcotics monopoly, and maintained strong diplomatic ties to Egypt. However, unlike the Ottoman state, Republican

²² Goldschmidt, Johnson, and Salmoni, *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*, 3.

²³ Reşat Kasaba, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, 1 edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 226.

Turkey participated in multilateral drug control negotiations and introduced narcotics regulations in response to international pressure.

Opiates and State Development in the Interwar Eastern Mediterranean

Beyond Egyptian, Turkish, and broader Middle Eastern historiography, this research also draws on and contributes to an increasingly complex body of scholarship concerning the relationship between narcotics and state-formation in the modern world. While historians and political economists have long studied the connections between commodities, such as cotton and oil, and state development, only recently have they begun to look at narcotics in the same light.²⁴ In *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History*, for example, Miriam Kingsberg examines how regulating narcotics shaped Japan's political legitimacy as a "moral nation" and empire.²⁵ Furthermore, Ryan Gingeras' *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey* gives heroin "discursive legitimacy" in contending that it cemented a symbiotic relationship between Turkish government officials and organized crime in modern Turkey that exists to this day.²⁶

While Kingsberg and Gingeras focus on vastly different regions and topics, both scholars approach narcotics as central to state formation. Similar to their work, the following research places opiates at the center of interwar Eastern Mediterranean history. By giving opiates "discursive legitimacy," this work traces their trajectory across countries and through the hands of an array of actors including traffickers, consumers, police, politicians, and diplomats.²⁷ These actors connect opiates to unique processes of state-building, such as 'Egyptianization' and

²⁴ For the links between cotton and development, or lack of, in Egypt see Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1969).

²⁵ Miriam Kingsberg, *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History* (Univ of California Press, 2013).

²⁶ Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey*, 3.

²⁷ Gingeras, 3.

etatism, that illuminate the tangible, yet tangled, relationship between opiates and institutional development in interwar Turkey and Egypt.

The following research demonstrates this complex and indirect relationship between narcotics and institutional development in interwar Egypt and Turkey. In the context interwar Egypt, it contends that commodities themselves did not fund institutional growth, but rather their sale and suppression influenced negotiations between factions within the semi-colonial government over the future direction of the Egyptian state. Unlike Egypt, the Turkish state directly profited from the sale of opiates. However, the institution through which Turkey controlled this trade also constituted a product of drug regulation. In fact, Turkey's narcotics monopoly emerged out of the same commercial and regulatory forces that contributed to the development of Egypt's drug enforcement and public health infrastructure during the interwar era. These forces demonstrate a dynamic in which both the sale *and* suppression of substances fuel institutional development. Therefore, they highlight the actions of not only politicians, diplomats, and bureaucrats, but also drug traffickers, dealers, and addicts in shaping the process of state building from the bottom up in interwar Egypt and Turkey.

Chapter Outline

This following research studies the impact of the interwar opiate trade and the subsequent epidemic on institutional development in Egypt and Turkey in two chapters. The first builds on the work of Gingeras, Kingsberg, as well as scholars of narcotics and state formation by highlighting the 'Egyptianness' of the interwar opiate trade and epidemic. It begins with a short section examining the Egyptian role in the interwar opiate economy as an important link in a transnational narcotic commodity chain. Drawing primarily on statistics from Egyptian government documents, this chapter then looks at Egyptian participation in the opiate trade as a

strategy to mitigate the adverse economic conditions that characterized life in interwar Egypt. Finally, it employs government reports and periodicals to demonstrate how Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians used the opiate epidemic to gain funding for institution development despite the stringent fiscal austerity of the Egyptian state. Ultimately, this chapter shows how Egyptians, from peddlers to politicians, promoted and policed the interwar opiate trade, shaped government responses to drug addiction, and impacted institutional development in early twentieth century Egypt.

The second chapter continues to explore the complex relationship between narcotics and state development by examining the impact of the interwar opiate trade and the ensuing epidemic in Egypt from a Turkish perspective. It begins with an overview of opium cultivation and regulation in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. The first section provides context for a subsequent discussion of how interwar drug trafficking and, in particular, the growing international concern over opiate consumption in Egypt engendered significant policy shifts regarding Turkey's narcotics industry. Drawing primarily on Turkish government reports, the following section highlights these changes and shows how continued Egyptian scrutiny, as part of a broader international effort targeting Turkey's narcotics economy, contributed to a centralized and far more lucrative opiate industry in Turkey. This process, which culminated in the creation of Turkey's Narcotics Substances Monopoly, demonstrates the complicated relationship between the Turkish narcotics trade and the Egyptian opiate epidemic. Incorporating Turkey into the history of the opiate trade in juxtaposition with Egypt, this chapter supplements the generally international narratives of interwar narcotics regulation with distinctly regional contours that expose the unexpected and somewhat counterintuitive consequences of promoting and policing the interwar Eastern Mediterranean opiate trade for regional state development.

Chapter 1: From Desperation to Development: Opiate Trafficking and State-Building in Interwar Egypt

In a memoir recounting his years as a British colonial civil servant in Egypt, Sir Thomas Wentworth Russell tells of a peculiar story involving heroin addicts, a barber, and the Cairo Antirabic Hospital. During the early 1930s, the doctor in charge of the hospital observed an odd trend among his patients. He noted that a number of the peasant-farmers (*fellaḥin*) admitted to the hospital hailed from one small village in the Egyptian Delta and, although they claimed to suffer from rabies, they actually came to the hospital seeking treatment for heroin addiction. Upon further investigation, government officials traced the trend back to a particular heroin user from the village who, following a stay at the Cairo hospital for the treatment of “mad dog bite,” returned home having overcome his desire for the drug.²⁸ Seeking similar services, heroin users in the village consulted the local barber who, “being an ingenious man” according to Russell, equipped the jaw of a dead dog with a steel spring that provided village addicts with a distinctly canine bite pattern in order to persuade the local government doctor to send them to Cairo for rabies treatment.²⁹

The villagers’ desperate reaction to the dearth of public health services in rural areas of the country illustrates the scope and severity of opiate consumption in interwar Egypt. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, large quantities of primarily, but not exclusively, Turkish opiates flowed across the Eastern Mediterranean to Egypt. These substances, which ranged from heroin and morphine to less-common derivatives of opium, triggered an unprecedented opiate epidemic that swept through the country and claimed at least 500,000 out

²⁸ Sir Thomas Wentworth Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service, 1902-1946*, 1st ed. (London: J. Murray, 1949), 234-235.

²⁹ Russell, *Egyptian Service, 1902-1946*, 234-235.

of 14 million Egyptians as addicts.³⁰ While the precipitous increase in the sale and consumption of opiates in interwar Egypt led to myriad social problems, they also created economic and political opportunities. This chapter shows how Egyptians, from peasants to politicians, used these opportunities as a means to relieve the local economic strains of the Great Depression and negotiate state institutional development by promoting and policing the interwar opiate trade.

The Egyptian Epidemic and the Interwar Opiate Trade

The burgeoning interwar opiate trade emerged during a period of great economic, political, and social upheaval that reshaped much of Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East between roughly 1918 and 1939. In these regions, the aftermath of the First World War, the Great Depression, and their sweeping political reverberations contributed to an environment of economic desperation that heightened the appeal of opiate cultivation, refinement, and trafficking. Turkey, a country whose origins lie in the combined devastation of World War I, the Turkish War of Independence, forced migration, and intense internal social conflict, emerged as one of the world's primary cultivators of raw opium during the 1920s.³¹ While Ottomanists note opium's long history of exportation from Anatolia, in 1928 Turkish opium-cultivating regions such as Afyonkarahisar, Eskişehir, and Konya produced approximately 363,248 kilos of raw opium and during the late 1920s Turkey alone nearly supplied the demand from European opiate refiners.³² Although Switzerland, France, and Germany dominated the process of opiate

³⁰ For Egyptian addiction figures see Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1929* 31. In order to circumvent regulations restricting the export and import of heroin, refiners produced chemically unique substances such as 'Benzylmorphine' and 'Dionyl.' "UNODC - Bulletin on Narcotics - 1965 Issue 4 - 001," http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1965-01-01_4_page002.html.

³¹ Owen and Pamuk detail the economic state of the early Turkish Republic. Owen and Pamuk, 10. Block notes that: "As Turkey's territory and national economic dwindled, the relative significance of opium production naturally increased." Alan A. Block, "European Drug Traffic and Traffickers between the Wars: The Policy of Suppression and Its Consequences," *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 (1989): 317-320.

³² Both Gingeras and Poroy indicate that the beginning of large-scale opium exportation in Anatolia coincided with the period leading up to the First Opium War. Ryan Gingeras, "Beyond Istanbul's 'Laz Underworld': Ottoman Paramilitarism and the Rise of Turkish Organised Crime, 1908-1950," *Contemporary European History* 19, no.

refinement until the late 1920s, international pressure from the League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drug (OAC) forced them to introduce stringent opiate manufacturing regulations and during the early 1930s Turkey absorbed their market share.³³ With three alkaloid factories operating openly on the Bosphorus that generated approximately one ton of heroin and morphine a month, in the early 1930s Istanbul emerged as the global epicenter of the highly lucrative illicit opiate trade and the source of the large majority of opiates trafficked into Egypt.³⁴

Special Issue 03 (August 2010): 223. Ibrahim Ihsan Poroy, “Expansion of Opium Production in Turkey and the State Monopoly of 1828-1839,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 2 (1981): 192. Information on regions of opiate cultivation in western Anatolia can be found in the 1931 CNIB *Annual Report*. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1929*, 71. Block details the extent to which Turkey supplied European refinement. Block, 320.

³³ “Illicit Drug Trade,” *The Times*, January 23, 1930, The Times Digital Archive.

³⁴ While documents available at the Turkish Republic Archive (Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi) do not often directly address opiate trafficking between Turkey and Egypt, that fact that the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hariciye Vekâleti) commissioned numerous translations of Egyptian press and government documents concerning this trade demonstrates, at least, the government’s awareness and keen interest in these affairs. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA) 30.10.0.0.180.243, 27 January 1931; BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.12, 25 February 1931; BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.16, 19 May 1931; BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.17, 24 May 1931; BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.11, 1931 (publication date and month illegible); BCA 30.10.0.0.266.796.16, 15 March 1933. Istanbul’s alkaloid output figures can be found in the 1930 CNIB Annual Report. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, IX and 20.

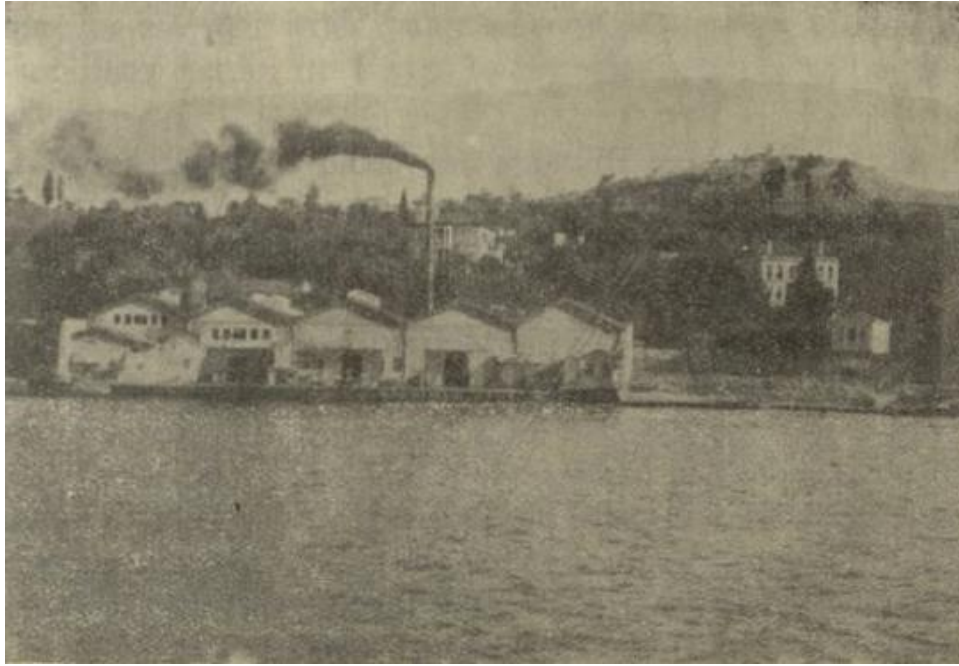


Figure 8: Opiate factory in the Kuzguncuk neighborhood of Istanbul (1930).¹

Motivated by the dire economic conditions across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East as well as the profitability of the opiate trade, diverse transnational networks formed to facilitate narcotics trafficking from Turkey to Egypt.³⁵ Reports from the Egyptian Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau (CNIB), which the Egyptian state created in 1929 to police the trade, divide these networks into the following four groups: large dealers of mainly Greek, British, Italian, French, and Egyptian extraction; large scale intermediaries of primarily Greek and Egyptian origins; almost exclusively Egyptian small scale dealers; and almost exclusively Egyptian small scale intermediaries.³⁶ Employing ships of all sizes and types from passenger steamers to the Khedival Mail Line, these vast smuggling networks trafficked opiates from Turkish and European factories to the Mediterranean ports of Trieste, Naples, Piraeus, and

³⁵ CNIB reports quantify the profitability of the opiate trade at the end of each *Annual Report*. Ibid., 101, Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 143, and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 158.

³⁶ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 64.

Beirut, and then on to points of entry into the large Egyptian consumer market such as Alexandria and Port Said.³⁷



Figure 9: CNIB recreation showing how traffickers land contraband in Egypt.¹

Once inside Egypt, opiates quickly moved through networks of primarily Egyptian dealers and intermediaries to a consumer base that the CNIB estimated to constitute at least 500,000 out of 14 million Egyptians in 1929.³⁸ These users generally purchased opiates in powder form and consumed them via nasal insufflation (*shamma*) or intravenous injection (*haqana*), for which they employed a variety of conventional and improvised apparatuses depending on their personal means.³⁹ Sale and consumption of opiates grew most common in the coffee shops, alleyways, and shanties (‘*ushash*’) of working-class areas such as the al-Zaher

³⁷ To a lesser extent and for bulkier so-called “black drugs” (hashish and opium), traffickers used routes that traveled through Damietta, Lake Manzala, and Lake Burullus via fishing boats. Desert smuggling via the rail system and camels in the Sinai and the Western Desert was also common for “black drugs.” Ibid., XIV and 36-49. CNIB documents also indicate that traffickers used Cyprus as a depot for Turkish and Syrian narcotics headed to Egypt. Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 76.

³⁸ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1929*, 31.

³⁹ In lieu of proper hypodermic needles, CNIB reports note that consumers often employed cheaper alternatives such as eyedroppers or fountain pen fillers attached to the tip of hypodermic needles. Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 112. The weekly *al-Muṣawwar* vividly details the consumption process. Mohammed Aziz, “a-Samm al-Abyad Yubā’ ‘Alanan fī a-Sawāri’” (“The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets”), *al-Muṣawwar*, January 4, 1929.

quarter of Bulaq in Cairo and the al-Hamamil neighborhood of Alexandria.⁴⁰ Indeed, the February 19, 1932 edition of *The Times* of London demonstrates the extent to which the epidemic spread among the Egyptian working class in reporting on the “curiosity” of a Cairo contractor who paid his laborers wages in heroin.⁴¹

Despite such reports, the epidemic was by no means solely a working class phenomenon. Owing to the relative affordability of opiates, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, their use diffused widely across Egyptian social strata, geographic regions, and among such disparate demographics as farmers, merchants, artisans, government clerks, and landlords.⁴² Writing for the weekly Egyptian current events magazine *al-Muṣawwar*, Mohammed Aziz conveys the wide socio-economic scope of opiate addiction in interwar Egypt by noting that the epidemic “has penetrated into the nation (*sha‘b*), striking the hand of the worker from artisans and farmers to the enlightened.”⁴³ Sir Thomas Russell, who served as both Cairo Police chief and director of the CNIB from 1929-1946, reinforces Aziz’s claim in writing with palpable distaste while describing a working class neighborhood of Cairo that “the Bulaq settling pit quickly filled with the human debris from every class of Egyptian society.”⁴⁴ While this broad socio-economic and geographic impact highlights the immense challenges that the epidemic posed for the Egyptian state and society, it also indicates the size and profitability of the opiate economy in interwar Egypt.

⁴⁰ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year*, 1931, 45-54, Russell, 223-224, and Mohammed Aziz, “a-Samm al-Abyad Yuba‘ ‘Alanan fī a-Sawārī’” (“The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets”), *al-Muṣawwar*, January 4, 1929.

⁴¹ OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT, “Drug Traffic In Egypt,” *The Times*, February 19, 1932, The Times Digital Archive.

⁴² Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year*, 1932, 114.

⁴³ Mohammed Aziz, “a-Samm al-Abyad Yubā‘ ‘Alanan fī a-Sawārī’” (“The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets”), *al-Muṣawwar*, January 4, 1929.

⁴⁴ Russell, 224.

Opiate Trafficking and the Great Depression

Beyond contributing to numerous social problems in interwar Egypt, the opiate epidemic also presented attractive economic opportunities for many Egyptians. While hundreds of thousands of Egyptians consumed opiates during the late 1920s and early 1930s, thousands more worked as traffickers, dealers, intermediaries, drug mules, and hired injectors.⁴⁵ Similar to the ill effects of the trade, these opportunities spanned social strata as well as geographic and professional divides.⁴⁶ Through their participation in the local opiate economy, farmers, laborers, young professionals, and countless others formed profitable networks that helped them relieve the acute strains that the 1929 global crisis placed on the Egyptian economy.

As in the United States, Europe, and across the world, the Great Depression severely damaged the Egyptian economy. The economic crisis of 1929 and the ensuing collapse of international markets devastated the Egyptian agricultural sector, which constituted approximately two-thirds of the country's gross domestic product throughout the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁷ Sharp declines in the value of cotton contributed to high rates of rural poverty and disease that triggered large numbers of Egyptian peasant-farmers to migrate to urban areas in search of work in newly established industries.⁴⁸ Egyptian industrial development however, neither quickly created jobs nor did it increase national income, while tariffs introduced to protect local industries increased the price of foodstuffs upon which the lower classes depended.⁴⁹ Consequently, Egyptian peasant-farmers and the urban working class

⁴⁵ CNIB records indicate the arrest of 7,098 individuals for trafficking offenses during the period between 6/16/1929-12/31/1933. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year, 1932*, 113 and *Ibid.*, *Annual Report for the Year, 1933*, 96.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, *Annual Report for the Year, 1933*, 112-125.

⁴⁷ Daly and Petry, 321. Owen and Pamuk, 30-31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Daly and Petry, 322. Owen and Pamuk, 39.

experienced increasing poverty rates during the interwar era, which, statistics suggest, encouraged many to seek economic opportunities in the illicit opiate trade.⁵⁰

However, the severe impact of the 1929 crisis was not confined to Egyptian peasant-farmers and the urban working class. The Great Depression also stunted the upward mobility of the Egyptian professional class by eliminating many of the middle class jobs on which these aspiring administrators and clerks depended.⁵¹ Their frustrated social rise eventually, historians have argued, translated into political radicalization as this demographic questioned the economic and political systems that had ostensibly destroyed its dreams of middle class prosperity.⁵² While the crisis of 1929 moved the *effendiyyah* to the extremes of the Egyptian political spectrum, economic dislocation similarly pushed them from the center to the margins of the labor force and, as data from CNIB reports indicates, encouraged many to engage in drug trafficking.

Despite the difficulty in determining the precise extent to which working and middle class Egyptians participated in opiate trafficking, CNIB statistics from the height of the epidemic indicate that these groups played a large role in the drug trade in relation to other demographics. For example, CNIB records from 1933 indicate that the Egyptian Native Tribunals and the Courts of the Frontiers Administration charged a total of 322 Egyptians citizens (as opposed to foreigners and foreign-residents charged in the Consular or Mixed Courts) with trafficking narcotics.⁵³ The record, which provides the trade of each accused individual, demonstrates that the large majority of the 322 Egyptians charged with trafficking narcotics in 1933 (298/322 or ~93%) maintained regular employment as street hawkers, Qur'an reciters, coffee sellers,

⁵⁰ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year, 1933*, 112-125 and Owen and Pamuk, 39.

⁵¹ Daly and Petry, 328.

⁵² In his essay on Egyptian society and economy from 1923-1952, Joel Beinin argues that the Great Depression damaged the Egyptian economy and with it liberal democracy, which attributed to the radicalization of politics in 1930s. Ibid.

⁵³ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year, 1933*, 112-125.

laborers, greengrocers, farmers, camel drivers, gravediggers, and other working class occupations.⁵⁴ Out of the remaining accused individuals, all but one (23/322, ~7%) held middle class or professional positions such as examiners, clerks, and merchants of various types.⁵⁵ Furthermore, CNIB statistics show that the most common occupations among drug traffickers in 1933 were those of hawker, laborer, and merchant.⁵⁶ As these trades either represented the margins of the Egyptian economy or, in the case of merchants, were highly susceptible to the severe economic fluctuations that the Great Depression triggered, these figures suggest that working and middle class Egyptians alike attempted to supplement their income and alleviate the intense economic hardship that characterized the period by engaging in drug trafficking.

⁵⁴ This number of traffickers includes 39 unemployed individuals. The one individual excluded from the 322 was a “commissioner.” Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1933, 114-125.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

In addition to the relationship between economic sectors that suffered during the Great Depression and the trades of accused Egyptian drug traffickers, the average age of individuals involved in narcotics smuggling indicates that young Egyptians also turned to the opiate trade to mitigate the impact of the 1929 crisis. While the CNIB offers no definitive data about the age of narcotics smugglers alone, its figures from the years 1929-1933 put the age of the vast majority of traffickers *and* addicts that the bureau arrested or admitted to state rehabilitation facilities between the years 21-35.⁵⁷ Beyond these statistics, CNIB reports also detail numerous instances of Egyptian youths smuggling narcotics aboard steamships that traveled along the route from Istanbul to Alexandria and Port Said.⁵⁸ In July 1931, for example, the bureau exposed a so-called “gang of youths” who together routinely smuggled between 2-3 kilograms of heroin into the port of Alexandria for the “notorious international trafficker” Dimitri “al-Hulwani” (the confectioner)

⁵⁷ Ibid., 98 and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 115.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40-43 and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 6-9.

Leboutis and his “very dangerous” right-hand man Sayed “al-Torabi” (the grave-digger).⁵⁹ This “gang” comprised both young men and women, the latter of which used special stockings to conceal the opiates on their persons.⁶⁰ Such cases demonstrate that for Egyptian youth, as for all Egyptians suffering from economic hardship during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the profitability of the opiate trade presented tempting possibilities.



Figure 10: Special stockings concealing opiates (1931).¹

In fact, the CNIB’s yearly reports went to great lengths to outline, quantify, and qualify these possibilities. By combining data concerning the cost of opiates collected from government officials throughout the country, each year the bureau determined the profitability of the opiate trade.⁶¹ Following an exhaustive display of empiricism spread out across numerous pages of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ These figures, which come from data collected by *‘umad* (sing. *‘umda*), *shuyukh al-balad*, and police officers, of course served the dual purpose of demonstrating the continued need for the Egyptian Government to

graphs, charts, and equations, every year this section of the *Annual Report* concluded by determining that “profits in this business are still attractive” or, as the report concluded in 1932, “extremely attractive.”⁶² Even the Egyptian weekly *al-Laṭāʾif al-Muṣawwar*, which generally featured articles criticizing the work and expenditures of the CNIB, concurred with this assessment by placing the street value of one ton of opiates in 1930 at “millions of pounds.”⁶³

In addition to the CNIB’s quantitative approach, the bureau’s reports also offer qualitative examples of the trade’s profitability and lure. For instance, CNIB reports feature the story of an Egyptian drug trafficker that the bureau arrested in 1931 who it estimated to have accumulated L.E. 150,000 (a figure equivalent to \$12,198,807 today) over the span of just a few years.⁶⁴ “Among the evidence obtained in the enquiry,” the director explained in a speech to the League of Nations OAC, was “a document to show that seven years ago a judicial *saisie* was made upon him for unpaid alimony to his wife, and the forced sale of his household goods brought in the total sum of L.E. 37.”⁶⁵ The incredible profits that this trafficker amassed over a period of just a few years reinforce the CNIB’s claim concerning the lucrative nature of the interwar Egyptian opiate trade while demonstrating its great appeal to individuals susceptible to the harsh economic conditions that characterized life for many Egyptians during the 1930s.

The Interwar Opiate Epidemic and Egyptian Institutional Development

Beyond the economic opportunities that the interwar opiate trade generated for working and middle class Egyptians to mitigate the impact of the Great Depression, the resulting opiate

fund the CNIB. Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, 101, Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 143, and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 158.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “al-Ittijār bil- Mukhadarāt wa ‘Aṣabat al-Umam” (“The Trade in Narcotics and the League of Nations”), *al-Laṭāʾif al-Muṣawwar*, January 7, 1930.

⁶⁴ The Egyptian pound (L.E. or EGP) was pegged to the British pound (GBP) at a rate of 0.975 to 1 from 1914-1962. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 148 and “Historical UK Inflation Rates and Calculator,” *Historical UK Inflation Rates and Calculator*, <http://inflation.stephenmorley.org/>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

epidemic also served as a catalyst for political activity that strengthened the ongoing Egyptian effort to develop state institutions and social welfare programs. Reacting to the dramatic spread of opiate consumption in interwar Egypt, local bureaucrats and politicians overcame the stringent fiscal conservatism of the semi-colonial Egyptian state to build and develop government institutions that employed and served Egyptians. This development led to the creation of enforcement institutions like the CNIB and improved public health services providing treatment for narcotics addiction. While part of the larger push for institutional development that corresponded with increases in Egyptian autonomy during the early 1920s, this process marked a significant departure from the trends that had characterized Egyptian economic policy since the beginning of the British occupation.⁶⁶

Throughout the British occupation of Egypt, London enforced a program of economic austerity that aimed to ensure repayment of the Egyptian debt.⁶⁷ Above all else, this program emphasized a balanced budget and provided little funding for education or social services.⁶⁸ Due to the lack of public health services and the liberal British policy towards foreign missionaries, missionary activity expanded widely in Egypt during the 1920s.⁶⁹ This provoked a backlash from both Muslim activists and the state officials that lead each group to create their own social welfare system.⁷⁰ With increased Egyptian autonomy and the Egyptianization of the state bureaucracy during the 1920s, investment in previously neglected social services emerged as the top priority of Egyptian politicians and administrators.⁷¹ However, with de-facto British

⁶⁶ Owen and Pamuk, 36-38.

⁶⁷ Daly and Petry, 240.

⁶⁸ Owen and Pamuk, 33

⁶⁹ Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*, 8.

⁷⁰ Baron, 8.

⁷¹ Owen and Pamuk, 36-38.

dominance over Egyptian domestic policy continuing to frustrate such efforts, the exigencies of the interwar opiate epidemic strengthened the Egyptian drive for institutional development.⁷²

The CNIB emerged as the first product of Egyptian efforts to develop and strengthen state institutions while addressing the interwar opiate epidemic. In 1929 Prime Minister Mohammad Mahmud Pasha established the CNIB in response to the scope and severity of the interwar opiate epidemic and, according to a 1929 article in *al-Muṣawwar* announcing the bureau's formation, he molded the CNIB "in the fashion of the office that was founded in the Ministry of the Interior for resisting Communism and the struggle against its propagandists."⁷³ The goals of the CNIB were fourfold: to identify the source of drugs imported into Egypt, to present facts to the League of Nations, to prosecute traffickers in Egypt, and to inhibit smuggling in a way that would increase the price of substances beyond the threshold of affordability for Egyptian peasant-farmers.⁷⁴ To achieve these aims, the Egyptian government provided the CNIB with an annual budget of L.E. 10,000 and direct access to all government departments as well as the ability to coordinate directly with foreign public security authorities.⁷⁵

Although CNIB records do not indicate the precise number or the nationality of its employees and British civil servants occupied top administrative positions within the organization, Egyptians constituted the majority of CNIB staff. Below CNIB director Russell Pasha, Egyptians performed a multitude of functions as constables, detectives, clerks, translators, undercover agents, and informants for the bureau.⁷⁶ During the peak years of the epidemic from 1929-1933, CNIB records indicate that the bureau opened branches throughout the country,

⁷² Selma Botman demonstrates the nature and extent of continued British involvement in Egyptian politics in here chapter on Egypt's "Liberal Age." Daly and Petry, 285-308.

⁷³ Russell, 225-226. "Maktab al-Mukhadarāt" ("Bureau of Narcotics"), *al-Muṣawwar*, March 29, 1929.

⁷⁴ Russell's memoirs are full of romantic images of the Egyptian peasant-farmer (*fellah*), who Russell and many of his British contemporaries seemed to view through the colonial lens of 'noble savagery,' but, in reality, constituted an integral part of the commodity chain supplying cotton to Manchester mills. Russell, 226.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Russell, 225-226. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 144.

created new relationships with domestic and international enforcement agencies, produced an increasing number of documents, and hired more Egyptians to staff the lower ranks of its organization.⁷⁷

Established in August 1930, the CNIB branch in Alexandria best exhibits the trajectory of the institution's development.⁷⁸ Due to Alexandria's central position in regional drug trafficking as a point of entry into the large Egyptian market, the CNIB hired a number of Egyptian employees to perform clerical and investigative work in coordination with local police and port authorities.⁷⁹ The investigative work of one such employee, detective Ahmed Ali Bahloul, appears prominently in the CNIB *Annual Report for the Year 1931* due to his unfortunate passing after a being struck with a flower pot hurled from the balcony of a hashish den during a stakeout.⁸⁰ Bahloul, who constituted the first CNIB officer killed while performing his duties, demonstrates both the significant and often dangerous role that Egyptians played in policing the drug trafficking on behalf of the CNIB as well as a physical manifestation of Egyptian institutional development stemming from the opiate epidemic.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, xi and 72.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 45.

⁸¹ Ibid.



Figure 11: CNIB officer and detectives in reconstructed scene of trafficker injecting addicts (1933).¹

While government responses to the epidemic stimulated the growth of enforcement institutions such as the CNIB, they also led to increased funding for Egyptian public health and social services. This money funded research concerning narcotics consumption, improved existing public health services, and helped provide treatment for addiction. However, unlike the creation of enforcement agencies such as the CNIB, funding for public health and social services emerged as a major point of contention between the British civil servants and local bureaucrats. These disputes illuminate both the process of negotiation that occurred between austerity-minded British advisors and pro-development (or pro-Egyptianization) parties within the state over the

trajectory of institutional growth in Egypt as well as the impact of the interwar opiate epidemic on such discussions.

The most significant of these discussions concerned the development of institutions, services, and policies to provide and improve treatment for Egyptian opiate addicts. As early as 1927, the Egyptian Prisons Department proposed to implement a policy to treat opiate users in a clinical setting rather than continuing to incarcerate them en masse.⁸² Whether due to lack of urgency in the years prior to the opiate epidemic or fiscal concerns, these proposed changes did not come to fruition. However, as the Egyptian press began to cover the spreading opiate epidemic in 1929 with gripping headlines such as “The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets,” it also published a series of feature stories and op-ed pieces demonstrating public support for a medical approach to opiate addiction.⁸³ In early January 1929, for example, an *al-Muṣawwar* article titled “The Rehabilitation of Narcotic Substance Addicts” laid out the following case for the hospitalization of drug addicts:

Those imprisoned for drug possession with the aim of consumption [as opposed to trafficking]—and their numbers reach an upward of 2,500—are now carrying out their sentences in prisons or in hospitals attached to them. However, experiences indicate that the current condition of [Egyptian] prisons does not allow those seeking to rehabilitate incarcerated addicts to do so in a way that suits their state of health. These prisoners must all be discharged from the current institutions and placed in a special “reformatory” built on a system more closely resembling that of a hospital than a prison. The advantage to [reforming] the prisons is sufficiently clear that the honorable general director [of the Prisons Department] wrote a report last year suggesting the construction of the aforementioned reformatory... Indeed, those addicted to narcotic substances are sick (*marḍa*) and not criminals. Therefore, prisons do not benefit, but rather harm them.⁸⁴

That same month similar articles appeared in *al-Muṣawwar* calling for the “need for these wretches to be treated by the medical profession” as well as for “the acceleration of the

⁸² Ibid., p. 68-70

⁸³ Mohammed Aziz, “a-Samm al-Abyad Yubā‘ ‘Alanan fī a-Sawāri‘ ‘” (“The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets”), *al-Muṣawwar* (al-Qāhirah: Mu’assasat Dār al-Hilāl) Jan. 4, 1929

⁸⁴ “The Rehabilitation of Narcotic Substance Addicts,” *al-Muṣawwar* (al-Qāhirah: Mu’assasat Dār al-Hilāl), Jan. 4, 1929.

construction of this [aforementioned] reformatory.”⁸⁵ These articles demonstrate that medical approaches to narcotics addiction held great currency among readership of *al-Muṣawwar* and perhaps among the great number of Egyptians concerned with the rise in opiate consumption.

Working in this environment of favorable public opinion that the epidemic fostered, in 1931 Director-General Tawfiq Abdulla Pasha reiterated the Egyptian Prison Department’s proposal for a reformatory and set forward detailed plans for such a facility.⁸⁶ These plans called for the government to construct a “special Sanatorium” featuring a multiple step rehabilitation program that would combine various treatment strategies including medical procedures, moral support, drug education, professional training, and psychological treatment.⁸⁷ Additionally, Tawfiq advocated judicial reforms based on the recommendations of addiction treatment studies from around the world that would allow for addicts to receive “indeterminate sentences” to his proposed institution and for their release to be conditional upon the Prison Department declaring them cured.⁸⁸ Tawfiq Pasha’s proposal however, elicited a series of aggressive responses from fiscally conservative British advisors to the Egyptian state.

In response to Tawfiq’s proposal, the Director of the Lunacy Division, Dr. H.W. Dudgeon, advocated concentrating state funds on continuing to wipe out the opiate trade rather than exerting “tremendous effort and much money...to guard this class [of drug users] against themselves.”⁸⁹ Such a plan, he argued, would simply deprive the mentally ill of adequate care.⁹⁰ As Dr. Dudgeon, CNIB Assistant Director Miralai Baker Bey came to similar conclusions.

⁸⁵ Mohammed Aziz, “a-Samm al-Abyad Yubā‘ ‘Alanan fī a-Sawāri’” (“The White Poison that is Sold Openly in the Streets”), *al-Muṣawwar*, January 4, 1929 and “Muhāraba mā Yuhadad al-Mujtama‘ al-Masriyy min al-Afāt al-ijtimā‘iyy” (“The Battle Against What Threatens the Egyptian Society in Terms of Social Vices”), *al-Muṣawwar*, January 25, 1929.

⁸⁶ Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 68-70.

⁸⁷ Capitalization in original text. Ibid., 70.

⁸⁸ In a 1932 erratum the CNIB clarified that this policy would not apply to narcotics traffickers. Ibid., 1931, 70 and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 117.

⁸⁹ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 106-107.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Citing a New York study showing high rates of relapse among rehab patients as well as the “the large outlay involved in setting up...such clinics,” the “average type of addict in this country and his value to society,” and the “present financial stringency,” Baker Bey argued that, unless the Egyptian government passed legislation insuring detention of addicts for a certain period (which Tawfiq Pasha suggested) such plans should be “indefinitely pigeon-holed.”⁹¹

Despite strong objections from Dr. Dudgeon and Baker Bey, the Prisons Department eventually prevailed upon the Egyptian government to fund a sanatorium project. During the early 1930s the Egyptian Parliament allocated a total of L.E. 10,000 to organize, staff, and equip a rehabilitation center in Matariyyah under the administration of the Lunacy Division of the Public Health Department.⁹² Furthermore, in coordination with the Public Health Department it appears that the Prisons Department also effected judicial changes in 1931 allowing the state to hospitalize many of the addicts that voluntarily sought care in state mental facilities rather than incarcerating them for drug use.⁹³ Dr. Dudgeon, for his part, continued to lament the strains that addiction treatment put on the mental health system in Egypt, stating in 1932 that four new pavilions finished and added to the Khanka Asylum “would have considerably alleviated the overcrowding if it had not been for the admission of the 500 drug cases.”⁹⁴ However, CNIB reports demonstrate that this reform relieved severe overcrowding in the Cairo Central Prison system, which, due to arrests for opiate possession and consumption, grew to twenty-five percent overcapacity in the early 1930s.⁹⁵ Additionally, a 1933 report from the Turkish Directorate of Prime Ministry Transactions (Başvekâlet Muamelât Müdürlüğü) approving an Egyptian request

⁹¹ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 121-130.

⁹² The CNIB report from 1931 lists this plan as “pending execution.” Ibid., 70 and Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, 80.

⁹³ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1931*, 109.

⁹⁴ Ibid., *Annual Report for the Year 1932*, 143.

⁹⁵ Davenport-Hines, 289 and Russell, 225.

for Turkey to repatriate Egyptians found “guilty of poppy trafficking” ([h]aşhaş kaçakçılığından suçlu) suggests that these measures allowed the state to expand and refine its narcotics enforcement policies.⁹⁶

While these developments may have resulted in only small improvements in care for drug users and the general prison population, they represent significant victories for local bureaucrats in their push to develop Egyptian state institutions. The extension of addiction treatment to voluntarily admitted patients and the allocation of funds for a rehabilitation center demonstrate that state building in interwar Egypt constituted a process of negotiation between British civil servants and Egyptian officials. Although the fierce opposition of British civil servants to institutional development and acute national economic strain often shaped this process, these negotiations were not immune to the influence of public opinion. Therefore, this case conveys how popular anxiety over events such as the interwar opiate epidemic created not only problems for Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians to address, but also opportunities to overcome British opposition and strengthen their call for continued Egyptianization of state institutions in a period of severe economic hardship.

Chapter Conclusion

From the *fellaḥin* and the *effendiyyah* to local bureaucrats and politicians, the interwar period represented an era of intense economic strain for the large majority of Egyptians. While the working and middle classes faced increasing poverty rates and dwindling professional options, bureaucrats and politicians fiercely contended with the stringent fiscal conservatism of the semi-colonial Egyptian state. For each of these groups the interwar opiate trade presented timely economic opportunities. Though promoting and policing the subsequent opiate epidemic,

⁹⁶ Haşhaş (opium poppy) should not be confused with haşış (hashish). BCA 30.18.1.2.36.36.9, 15 May 1933.

Egyptians pragmatically satisfied the economic and political exigencies of the interwar era while intentionally and unintentionally contributing to their country's process of institutional development.

This chapter demonstrates the diverse entrepreneurial and administrative roles that Egyptians played in the interwar opiate trade. Focusing on the perspectives of local traffickers, police, bureaucrats, and politicians, it frames Egyptians not simply as victims of foreign poison, but as participants in a profitable transnational trade. This analysis both complicates previous histories of Egypt's interwar opiate epidemic as well as illuminates the economic and political impacts of Egyptian participation in the trade. By examining how local bureaucrats and politicians used public anxiety over the epidemic to support their ongoing institutional development efforts, it also reveals the complex relationship between narcotics and state building in interwar Egypt. During this period, both the sale *and* suppression of opiates shaped local debates over Egyptian institutional growth. The actions of Egyptian smugglers, statesmen, and even barbers, therefore, not only impacted the interwar opiate trade and defined government responses to narcotics consumption, but also influenced the trajectory of their state in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 2: Diplomacy and Development: The Opiate Trade and State-Building in Interwar Turkey

In January of 1931, at the height of the Egyptian opiate epidemic, the Turkish Ambassador to Egypt Muhittin Akyüz Pasha paid a visit to Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdel Fattah Yahiya Pasha to discuss an unsettling caricature that appeared on the front page of the local satirical magazine *al-Kashkul* during the previous month.⁹⁷ Yahiya initially apologized to Muhittin for the cartoon and conveyed to the ambassador that he had already arranged with the Egyptian Interior Ministry for the incident to “not repeat itself.”⁹⁸ Yahiya subsequently downplayed the significance of the caricature by requesting that it “not be given to much importance, as *al-Kashkul* is a satirical magazine.”⁹⁹ On the contrary however, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered the cartoon a matter of great importance that warranted the attention of the Republic’s top policy makers. In a report to the Prime Minister’s Office in Ankara dated January 27, 1931, the Ministry described the cartoon as “a very hurtful, extremely ugly, and insolent picture of his Excellency, the President of our Republic, the Victorious [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk] representing the nation with a bag full of opium in his hands and money from selling opium at his sides, under which [it reads] verbatim: ‘Oh Victorious [Atatürk], with all these rewards, does Islam remain our religion?’ To which his Excellency responds: ‘Fools, our religion is money.’”¹⁰⁰

Beyond Turkish sensitivity to irreverent depictions of the country’s leader, the Foreign Minister’s austere response to *al-Kashkul*’s caustic caricature highlights the impact of mounting Egyptian pressure on Turkey’s opiate industry during the interwar period. Throughout the late

⁹⁷ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.8 27 January 1931.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

1920s and early 1930s opium cultivators, refiners, and traffickers operating in Turkey greatly profited from the opiate trade and, in particular, their proximity to Egypt's large narcotics consumer base. As profits from Turkey's opiate exports grew, so too did Egyptian condemnation of the unregulated industry. Egyptian voices contributed to a growing tide of international diplomatic, economic, and popular pressure that eventually prevailed upon Turkey to introduce a narcotics control regime in the early 1930s.¹⁰¹ Turkey's subsequent move to regulate and monopolize its domestic opiate industry had transformative effects on the trade that reverberated throughout the Turkish government and fueled its emerging program of statist economic policies. The following chapter examines the impact of the epidemic in Egypt on the opiate trade in Turkey as well as the republic's economy and institutional development.

Opiate Cultivation and Regulation in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republican Turkey

While opium has a long history of cultivation in Anatolia and other Indo-Mediterranean societies, Ottomanists trace the large-scale exportation of the crop to the decade leading up to the First Opium War (1839-1842).¹⁰² The illicit opium trade in Qing China not only led to a belligerent display of British gunboat diplomacy that forced the continued importation of opium upon the last imperial dynasty to rule China, but also stimulated the opiate export market in the Ottoman Empire. With diffuse networks of primarily British and American merchants connecting Western Anatolian opium cultivators to Chinese consumers, the Ottoman opium economy proliferated during the early-mid nineteenth century.¹⁰³ Cultivation in Anatolia increased from approximately 154,000 kilograms in 1836 to 731,253 kilograms in 1877 and

¹⁰¹ BCA 30.18.1.2.32.80.7 25 December 1932.

¹⁰² Both Gingeras and Poroy indicate that the beginning of large-scale opium exportation in Anatolia coincided with period leading up to the First Opium War. Ryan Gingeras, "Beyond Istanbul's 'Laz Underworld,'" 223 and Poroy, 192.

¹⁰³ Poroy, 192.

Ottoman opium grew to account for over ten percent of that consumed in Qing China during the mid nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Due to the vast quantities of opium cultivated in Anatolia, opium emerged as an integral part of the Ottoman economy during the early-mid nineteenth century.

The lucrative nature of opium cultivation in early-mid nineteenth century Anatolia eventually drew the attention of Mahmud II's reform-minded Ottoman State, which engaged in the first attempt to regulate the Anatolian opium economy. In 1828, Mahmud II enforced an official monopoly (*Yed-i Vahit*) on all opium under cultivation in Anatolia in order to more effectively tax the trade in 1828.¹⁰⁵ The monopoly served as an important source of funds for the Ottoman state's ongoing military reforms such as the *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* army, which Mahmud II created to replace the increasingly rebellious Janissary corps.¹⁰⁶ Although the *Yed-i Vahit* suffered from a lack of economic and political support since its inception and British diplomatic pressure eventually induced the Ottoman state to end its agricultural monopoly system in 1838, Anatolian opium and its proceeds diffused throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, East Asia, and North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the opium trade not only connected the Ottoman Empire to global narcotics markets, but it put the empire at odds with the emerging international drug control movement.

¹⁰⁴ Poroy gives no indication if this figure represents only Western Anatolia, all Anatolia, or opium cultivation in the entire Ottoman Empire. He also conveys these figures in *okas* (120,000 *okas* in 1836 and 570,000 *okas* in 1877). The *oka*, a former Ottoman imperial mass metric, constituted approximately 1.2829 kg. Poroy uses records from the mostly British and American companies involved in the Ottoman–Chinese opium trade to construct the ladder figure. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ It appears that the etymology of the term *Yed-i Vahit* stems from the Arabic phrase *yed al-wahid* (the one hand). For Mahmud II see: Poroy, 198.

¹⁰⁶ Hanioglu, 59.

¹⁰⁷ Financial troubles stemming from the Empire's ongoing conflicts with Russia, Greece, and Egypt as well as expenses associated with Sultan Mahmud II's administrative and military reforms placed acute strains on the state budget that limited the ability of Izmir's superintendent of taxes and customs to enforce the opium monopoly and ultimately contributed to a burgeoning informal opium economy. Poroy, 198-202

At the beginning of the twentieth century a confluence of technological, medical, religious, and political processes piqued global interest in narcotics regulation and ushered in an era of drug diplomacy that swept the Ottoman Empire up into debates over international narcotics control. According to William B. McAllister, whose survey of twentieth century drug diplomacy details these trends, “currents in nineteenth-century science, research, technology, industry, business organization, and marketing converged in the realm of drugs.”¹⁰⁸ Considering the cases of heroin and cocaine, for example, advances in global transportation infrastructure, a growing patent medicine sector, improved pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, the proliferation of medical journals, and the emergence of aggressive drug advertising campaigns throughout Europe and North America dramatically increased their popularity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ In response, domestic social reform groups and the emerging public health establishment led calls for increased drug regulation and enforcement, which produced formal narcotics laws and ethical rules for their pharmaceutical industries in most North American and European countries by 1914.¹¹⁰ Simultaneously, missionary societies, civil servants, businessmen, and politicians propelled drug control into the international arena of multilateral negotiations by highlighting global connections between cultivation, refinement, and consumption in their push for regulation.¹¹¹ The tireless efforts of these early twentieth century internationalists, resulted in a series of multilateral forums that aimed to encourage major narcotics producers, like the Ottoman Empire, to introduce regulation regimes.

¹⁰⁸ William B. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 14.

¹⁰⁹ McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History*, 14-16.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 16-19.

¹¹¹ McAllister notes that multilateral drug control regimes in the early twentieth century emerged out of mid nineteenth century traditions of internationalism. Ibid., 20-22.

The Ottoman Empire, however, fiercely resisted international efforts to curb its opiate industry and refused to partake in multilateral narcotics negotiations.¹¹² The Ottoman State, for example, declined to attend in the 1909 Shanghai Opium Commission on the grounds that domestic unrest following Abdülhamid II's counter coup precluded their participation.¹¹³ Similarly, Istanbul claimed that the 1911 Hague Opium Conference would negatively impact the state's economy and—in the context of growing nationalist sentiment and the build up to the First World War—once again ignored international appeals to participate.¹¹⁴ Although the Allied occupation of the Ottoman Empire during World War I forced the terms of the 1911 Hague Convention on the remnants on the Ottoman state in Istanbul, the Turkish nationalists' 1922 victory over Greek forces in western Anatolia and the abolition of the sultanate in 1923, according to Gingeras, “rendered Ottoman acquiescence to the Hague consensus null and void.”¹¹⁵

During the early years of the Turkish Republic, the country's position on narcotics regulation differed little from its imperial predecessor. Rather than acquiesce to global narcotics controls, the modern Turkish Republic played a prominent role in the international opiate economy from its inception.¹¹⁶ Out of the devastation of World War I, the Turkish War of Independence, forced migration, and intense internal social conflict, Turkey emerged as one of

¹¹² Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey*, 65.

¹¹³ Gingeras, 65 and McAllister 26-28.

¹¹⁴ Gingeras, 65-66 and McAllister, 31-33.

¹¹⁵ The Allied victory in World War I also forced the terms of the 1911 Hague Convention on Germany while incorporating drug control into the League of Nations' covenant. The Covenant of the League of Nations, article 23, section (c) states that League members “will entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children, and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs.”

“Avalon Project - The Covenant of the League of Nations,”

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art23 and Gingeras, 66 and McAllister, 36-37.

¹¹⁶ Along with Turkey, France, Germany, and other countries that suffered greatly in WWI played important roles in the interwar opiate economy. Alan Block notes that: “As Turkey's territory and national economic dwindled, the relative significance of opium production naturally increased. Block, 320.

the world's primary cultivators of raw opium during the 1920s.¹¹⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Turkey alone nearly supplied the demand from European opiate refiners during the late 1920s.¹¹⁸ With intense international pressure on dominate European opiate refiners Switzerland, France, and Germany during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Turkish narcotics manufactures increased their production capacity and transformed Istanbul into the world's foremost purveyor of opiates.¹¹⁹

While Turkey began to attend multilateral drug control negotiations after 1924, McAllister argues that it did not do so out of a genuine desire to limit the production and consumption of narcotics. As he suggests, Turkey's presence at the 1924-1925 International Opium Convention in Geneva—and that of other major drug cultivating nations like Bolivia, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Persia, Siam, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia—served merely to ensure the country's ability to veto proposals it considered too burdensome.¹²⁰ Rather than regulate Turkish production, the author confirms that the restrictions that the convention placed on western narcotics manufactures stimulated illicit opiate refinement in Turkey and transformed it into the “favored location for unscrupulous operators.”¹²¹ This development, in turn, shaped Turkish participation in the 1930 Preliminary Conference on the Limitation of the Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs in London, where the nation's representatives, in McAllister's words,

¹¹⁷ Owen and Pamuk detail the economic state of the early Turkish Republic in their *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century*. Owen and Pamuk, 10. Block, 317-320.

¹¹⁸ Information on regions of opiate cultivation in western Anatolia can be found in the 1931 Egyptian Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau's 1929 *Annual Report*. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1929*, 71. Block details the extent to which Turkey supplied the European refinement. Block, 320.

¹¹⁹ Istanbul's alkaloid output figures can be found in the 1930 CNIB Annual Report. Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, *Annual Report for the Year 1930*, IX and 20. “Illicit Drug Trade,” *The Times*, January 23, 1930, The Times Digital Archive

¹²⁰ McAllister, 67.

¹²¹ Ibid., 91-92.

“delivered the final blow” to the failing negotiations by demanding one-third of the entire global quota for the export of manufactured drugs.¹²²

Although markedly less definitive than McAllister’s assessment, Turkish government documents from the period in between the 1930 and 1931 multilateral narcotics control conventions provide further details concerning the country’s policy towards drug regulation during the late 1920s and early 1930s. A report from Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras to the Prime Minister’s Office, for example, at least in principle acknowledges the need for international narcotics control by stating that “[o]ur government’s goal in regards to opium is this: opium constitutes an important segment of our agricultural economy, but it is not a foreign issue [to us] to save humanity from the calamity of opium addiction. On the condition that we protect and defend our agricultural sector, we are not opposed to international restrictions.”¹²³ However, in the same report, Rüştü also asserts Turkey’s role as “important player in the opiate producing economy” as well as Turkey’s participation in an “appropriate quota” system among opiate refining countries.¹²⁴ Similarly, a report that the Turkish Health and Social Assistance Ministry (Sihhat ve İctimai Muavenet Vekâleti or S.İ.M.) commissioned prior to the multilateral narcotics control conference in 1931 characterizes opium as “one of the country’s very important economic products” and, furthermore, notes that the “export of raw opium [from Turkey] is not subject to any regulation.”¹²⁵

Although these reports do not constitute a comprehensive description of the late Ottoman and Turkish government’s position towards opium regulation, they do provide a clear sense of both the principals and limitations that guided their approaches to narcotics control. During

¹²² McAllister, 92.

¹²³ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.7 21 January 1931.

¹²⁴ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.7 21 January 1931.

¹²⁵ BCA 30.10.0.0.178.230.1 20 May 1931.

the early nineteenth century opium cultivation began to play a prominent role in the Ottoman economy. Despite state attempts to regulate the industry, internal and external pressures contributed to the *laissez-faire* nature of the Anatolian opium economy well into the twentieth century. The late Ottoman state refused to introduce narcotics production controls out of a sense of preoccupation and economic nationalism, which did not abate with the emergence of Republican Turkey and its participation in international drug conferences. The Egyptian opiate epidemic of the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, precipitated a wave of international pressure that forced Turkey to reconfigure its approach to narcotics control and dramatically altered the country's opiate economy.

Egypt, Turkey, and International Narcotics Control during the Interwar Period

Beyond the local social, economic, and political impacts of the interwar Egyptian opiate epidemic on which the previous chapter focuses, narcotics trafficking and consumption in interwar Egypt also had great regional and international implications. In response to widespread opiate use throughout the country, the Egyptian press launched a popular media assault on their nation's Turkish suppliers, which aimed both to inform the public of the ongoing epidemic and rally support for international narcotics regulation in Turkey. Simultaneously, Egyptian politicians and diplomats applied bilateral and multilateral pressure on their Turkish counterparts to introduce domestic narcotics regulation. Both Egyptian media and diplomatic efforts played a significant role in shaping the Turkish position towards drug control and the country's increasing adherence to international narcotics regulations during the interwar era. Egyptian pressure constituted one crucial part of a larger international campaign that aimed to implement drug control regimes in Turkey and across the globe.

Despite earlier failures of international drug diplomacy at the Shanghai Opium Commission (1909) and the Hague Opium Conference (1911), during the late 1920s and early 1930s multilateral efforts to control the global supply of narcotics continued. The League of Nations, which incorporated “the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children, and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs” into its covenant, served as the venue for global narcotics regulation efforts throughout the interwar era.¹²⁶ During this period the League hosted regular meetings in Geneva of the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drug (OAC) as well as narcotics conventions and conferences in 1924-1925, 1931, and 1936.¹²⁷

Although Egypt did not gain membership to the League of Nations until 1937 and, therefore, could not participate as an official representative in the OAC, conventions, and conferences, it, nonetheless, played a huge role in the organization’s narcotics deliberations.¹²⁸ As mentioned in the previous chapter, presenting facts to the League of Nations constituted one of the CNIB’s four primary goals.¹²⁹ Additionally, CNIB director Russell kept in “close touch” with the 1921-1934 British representative to the OAC Sir Malcolm Delevingne, circulated the bureau’s reports to the committee, and often addressed it as a representative of the Egyptian government.¹³⁰ In conjunction with the work of the CNIB and Egyptian diplomats, the Egyptian media applied fierce popular pressure on the Turkish government with frequent articles excoriating the country for its position on narcotics control. These efforts greatly contributed to

¹²⁶ The Covenant of the League of Nations, article 23, section (c) states that League members “will entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children, and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs.” “Avalon Project - The Covenant of the League of Nations,” http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art23.

¹²⁷ McAllister 43-155.

¹²⁸ Russell, 227.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 227-238.

the international campaign for drug regulations in Turkey and had a significant impact on Turkish narcotics control policy.

Egypt's first contribution to the international campaign for narcotics control in Turkey appeared in the country's press. In addition to articles such as those in *al-Muṣawwar* and *al-Laṭā'if al-Muṣawwar* raising public awareness about the opiate epidemic and the government response to it, reports from the Turkish Foreign Ministry to the Prime Minister's Office in Ankara demonstrate that publications like *al-Kashkul*, *al-Ahram*, *al-Mesā'*, and *al-Muqāṭam* also directly addressed Turkey's role in supplying raw and processed opiates. For example, in its article lampooning Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *al-Kashkul* notes the following:

“...in Turkey a vast of amount of opium is trafficked and the sale of narcotics substances constitutes an important portion of Turkey's budget revenue. The [Turkish] treasury therefore earns seven million [Turkish] Lira a year [from this trade] and, as Egypt is one of the closest countries to Turkey, the merchants that sell the products of Istanbul opium factories use every kind of trick (*her dürlü* [sic.] *hileleri istimal ettiklerinden*). News of Turkey [engaging in] this type of behavior has even reached the League of Nations and the issue of the sale of these poisonous substances in Turkey constitutes the most important [issue of] deliberation for the League's upcoming meeting.¹³¹

With international news agencies like Reuters picking up and distributing such articles, *al-Kashkul* and other Egyptian newspapers laid the blame for opiate addiction in Egypt squarely at the feet of Turkey's top policymakers and cast aspersions on the nascent Republic that reverberated throughout the halls of power in Cairo and Ankara as well as Geneva.¹³²

While Egyptian newspapers attacked the Turkish government for its opportunistic opiate policies, Egypt's diplomats and politicians brought the struggle against narcotics to Ankara and Geneva. As Turkish Foreign Minister Rüştü notes in his report to the Prime Minister's Office in January of 1931, in the period leading up to the OAC's meeting the following month, “Egyptian

¹³¹ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.8 27 January 1931.

¹³² Turkish government reports indicate that international news agencies picked up and distributed many of the articles on narcotics trafficking in interwar Egyptian that local newspapers published. BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.14 2 April 1931.

consulates in Turkey showed intense interest in this issue [of narcotics control].”¹³³ Owing to the CNIB’s earlier success using the OAC as a venue to build international support for narcotics regulation in Central Europe, the Egyptian government used this meeting as an opportunity to rally international support in opposition to the Turkish opiate industry.¹³⁴ Drawing upon the bureau’s detailed reports and statistics concerning the past year’s drug trafficking activity, Director Russell demonstrated that Turkey had replaced Central Europe as the primary supplier of opiates consumed in Egypt and that Turkish factories exported approximately six times the legal global demand for opiates.¹³⁵

Russell’s address to the Committee on behalf of the CNIB did not constitute an immediate success. In the face of what Russell referred to as “the glaring search-light of public opinion,” Turkish officials appeared unmoved.¹³⁶ Turkish representative Fuat Bey countered by questioning the CNIB’s statistics and the two delegates lapsed into what Russell describes as an “animated” discussion concerning the legitimacy of narcotics production in Turkey.¹³⁷ Although Fuat Bey’s initial position echoes the economic nationalism and concern about Turkish

¹³³ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.8 27 January 1931.

¹³⁴ In 1930, as extraterritorial courts in Egypt (the Mixed Courts) rendered the CNIB essentially powerless to regulate the opiate trade, the bureau sent Russell to confront the flood of drugs coming into the country from the international stage that the OAC provided. During his address on behalf of the CNIB, Russell exhorted the Central European governments to “prevent further harm to the Egyptian population from the consumption of narcotics produced in their States and distributed illicitly to satisfy the ‘fiendish greed’ of a few individuals.” On February 1, 1930, the Swiss government issued a decree prohibiting the manufacture of all synthetic derivatives of morphine with the initially reticent French, who Russell claims were initially unconcerned with the large-scale production of opiates within their borders granted that they were destined for abroad, following suit shortly after. “Illicit Drug Trade,” *The Times*, January 23, 1930, The Times Digital Archive, “Illicit Drug Traffic,” *The Times*, January 28, 1930, The Times Digital Archive, “The Fight Against Opium,” *The Times*, February 15, 1930, The Times Digital Archive.

¹³⁵ OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT, “Drug Traffic In Egypt,” *The Times*, January 16, 1931,

¹³⁶ Russell, 239.

¹³⁷ A copy of the 1930 CNIB report in the BCA indicates that the Turkish delegation received these statistics. BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.17 24 May 1931. OUR LEAGUE CORRESPONDENT, “The Drug Traffic,” *The Times*, February 3, 1931, The Times Digital Archive.

sovereignty from Foreign Minister Rüştü's pledge to "protect and defend out agricultural sector," it appears his defensive response quickly gave way to a form strategic accommodation.¹³⁸

Despite Turkish protestations, the country's position on opiate control shifted significantly following the February 1931 Committee meeting in Geneva. That month, in fact, the Egyptian newspaper *al-Muqattam* reported that the Turkish government decided to shutter three narcotics factories in Istanbul.¹³⁹ A governmental decree (*kararname*) from the Prime Minister's Office notes that Mustafa Kemal gave permission to shut one of these, the Etkim factory in Istanbul's Eyüp neighborhood, after it "tried to deceive the government" and had "been proven to be engaging in narcotics trafficking."¹⁴⁰ Turkey's move to close narcotics factories in Istanbul, as the Alexandria based *La Réforme* noted, also coincided with new export regulations and the appointment of "special agents" to monitor production that reported to the S.I.M.¹⁴¹ While it remains unclear to what extent Egyptian and multilateral diplomatic pressure elicited these responses, the Egyptian press did not hesitate to construct a causal relationship between the two. According to *al-Muqattam*, this decision "without a doubt takes world public opinion into account after the recently discovered facts about narcotics substance trafficking in Egypt and Cairo Police Chief Russell Pasha's statement at the Geneva Opium Commission."¹⁴² Building off the sense of optimism that initial shifts in Turkey's narcotics policy generated, *al-Muqattam* went as far as to project the end of the country's opiate industry by stating that "we await the banning of this trade."¹⁴³

¹³⁸ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.7 21 January 1931.

¹³⁹ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.11 (Date illegible).

¹⁴⁰ Gingeras lists the three factories targeted by the 1931 regulations as the Etkim, Oriental Products Co. and Kuzguncuk factories. Gingeras, 73-74. BCA 30.18.1.2.20.33.4 21 May 1931.

¹⁴¹ BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.14 2 April 1931.

¹⁴² BCA 30.10.0.0.180.243.11 (Date illegible).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Although Turkish government documents offer no indication of motives behind their decisions to begin implementing narcotics controls, they do present Turkish officials as eager to exploit policy shifts to improve their country's public image in Cairo and Geneva. In a May 27, 1931 report from the Turkish Foreign Ministry's Political Consultancy (Türkiye Cumhuriyet Hariciye Vekâlati Siyasî Müşavirlik) to the Prime Minister's Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs Şükrü Kaya conveys the following:

As soon as the aforementioned [Turkish] newspaper [about a new law in Turkey regulating the sale and export of narcotics] arrived at the embassy [in Cairo] I had the committee representative's decision translated [into Arabic and] I requested a meeting with the [Egyptian] Foreign Minister in order to give him a translated copy. Being happy with the declaration, Abdel Fattah Yahya Pasha said that because of the decision to subject cocaine and heroin—the most devastating drugs to the people of Egypt—to strict controls, Turkey had achieved great and beneficial results[.] I sent the second copy of this decision to Cairo Police Chief Russell Pasha. He was also pleased with the decision and said that he was confident of the great benefits of the Turkish Republic's good will towards humanity...On the issue at hand, the Egyptian press is content to print this [decision] verbatim and neither advances an idea for us or against us on this matter. Up until the publishing of this decision, because of trafficking, the Egyptian press publications were intensely against us, of course, [but] suddenly they are changing their tone (*bir den bire* [sic.] *tebdili lisan ederek*) and printing all the details.¹⁴⁴

Kaya's concern that both Egyptian diplomats and the local press acknowledge the Turkish government's initial narcotics control measures demonstrates the impact that these individuals and their associated institutions had in shaping Turkey's emerging drug policy. While many of the shifts they effected likely constituted incremental or even superficial changes in Turkish policy, these groups contributed to a much larger movement that coalesced that spring in Geneva.

The 1931 "Conference on the Limitation of the Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs" demonstrates the confluence of Egyptian and international efforts to pressure Turkey into enacting narcotics controls. During the meeting (May 27–July 13, 1931), the United States,

¹⁴⁴ BCA 30.10.0.0.178.230.2 27 May 1931.

Canada, Egypt, other narcotics consuming countries continued to advocate for limited controls on raw opium, heroin, morphine, and increasingly popular opium-based derivatives such as codeine.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, drug-producing states like Turkey and Yugoslavia aimed to leverage their capacity to flood the market with opiates to gain favorable regulatory conditions.¹⁴⁶ “The Turks,” according to McAllister, “used their manufacturing capacity as a bargaining chip; they would close domestic factories if western pharmaceutical firms promised to buy their raw opium from Ankara.”¹⁴⁷ The disparity in the positions of these two camps resulted in a combination of lively multilateral debate and bilateral coercion targeting Turkey’s narcotics industry.

Attending the conference as a representative of Egypt, CNIB director Russell participated vigorously in the debate. In a report concerning the conference from the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s Political Consultancy to the Prime Minister’s Office, Foreign Minister Rüşü objects to the impact of the address that Russell gave to conference in noting that:

At the Geneva conference many different countries’ statements were opposed to Turkey and, in particular, the remarks that Egypt’s General Security Chief Russell Pasha [made] on this spot have been published in detail in the newspapers. [This] has produced the idea that Turkey does not want to deal with the trafficking of narcotic substances and does not regard the humane aspects of this issue as important.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, Rüşü complains that the continued appearance of articles about Turkish opiate trafficking in European periodicals “creates the opinion that Turkey tolerates opium smuggling.”¹⁴⁹ In linking Russell’s address to the conference to newspaper articles about drug trafficking in Turkey, the Foreign Minister’s comments illuminate the connections between international media and diplomatic pressure in the campaign for drug control in Turkey.

¹⁴⁵ McAllister, 96-108.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 94.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴⁸ BCA 30.10.0.0.178.2303 2 June 1931.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

While Egypt employed the conference as a venue to place multilateral pressure on Turkey, the United States simultaneously took a much more direct approach. Harry Anslinger attended the conference on behalf of the United States Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), which the country's established in 1930 to address domestic and international narcotics trafficking and served as the predecessor to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).¹⁵⁰ Anslinger, who served as FBN commissioner from 1930–1962, openly called on Turkey to end, what the bureau viewed as, the overproduction and illicit trafficking of narcotics.¹⁵¹ Perhaps understanding how economic nationalism factored into Turkish narcotics policy, Anslinger, furthermore, threatened to prohibit drug imports from Turkey unless the country acceded to the bureau's demands.¹⁵² While it does not appear that Anslinger acted on this threat and Turkey left the conference having refused to sign the 1931 narcotics treaty, the conference set the stage for more successful Egyptian and United States attempts at diplomacy and coercion in the near future.¹⁵³

Although the 1931 conference did not succeed in convincing the Turkish government to regulate its opiate industry, it caught the attention of Turkish policymakers and paved the way for both the United States and Egypt to engage in high-level bilateral drug discussions with Turkey. In fall of 1931, for example, the Egyptian government granted permission for Russell to travel to Istanbul and Ankara, where he discussed narcotics control with Prime Minister İsmet İnönü.¹⁵⁴ Unlike the tense and initially unproductive interactions between Russell and the Turkish delegate to the OAC, the CNIB director notes in his memoir that "...İsmet Pasha

¹⁵⁰ McAllister, 89-108.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 107-108.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 105-108.

¹⁵⁴ Russell, 240.

received me in the most friendly and hospitable manner.”¹⁵⁵ As Russell met with Prime Minister İnönü, the US State Department dispatched the American Ambassador to Turkey Joseph Grews to make the case for narcotics control to President Atatürk.¹⁵⁶ According to Russell their collective diplomacy played a significant role in shaping Turkish narcotics control policy and he notes the following in describing his meeting with İnönü:

From that date the fate of Istanbul as a centre of the illicit drug traffic was sealed. It lay with the American Minister to Turkey [Ambassador Grew] to bring the state of affairs to the direct notice of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who at once realized that not only was Istanbul becoming a menace to the health of the world but also that local addiction was spreading among the officer class of his own army.¹⁵⁷

While Russell’s comments provide a social and humanitarian logic for understanding coming shifts in Turkey’s narcotics control policy, Turkish government reports demonstrate that economic concerns clearly also factored into the decisions of İnönü, Atatürk, and other prominent politicians.

As Russell and Grew worked to influence Turkish narcotics policy with direct social and humanitarian appeals in Ankara, FBN Commissioner Anslinger labored in Washington to create stronger economic disincentives for Turkish opiate trafficking. In this effort, he enlisted the help of New York Congressman Fiorello La Guardia to draft a bill in the House of Representatives that would subject all shipments from states not party to 1912 Hague Convention to searches for illicit drugs.¹⁵⁸ Similar to Anslinger’s previous threat to ban drug imports from Turkey, it does not appear that La Guardia introduced this legislation, but rather that the bill remained in committee from 1931–1932.¹⁵⁹ In this way, it seems, La Guardia and Anslinger maintained the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ McAllister, 108.

¹⁵⁷ Russell, 240.

¹⁵⁸ McAllister 108. Gingeras, 72.

¹⁵⁹ BCA 30.10.0.0.267.801.21 24 February 1932.

specter of legislation that would negatively impact all Turkish exports to the United States without hindering the delicate diplomatic work of their colleagues Russell and Grew.

Irrespective of the logic behind Anslinger's machinations, La Guardia's prospective legislation produced tangible results. One indication of its impact comes in the form of a report from Turkish Foreign Minister Kaya to the Prime Minister's Office in February 1932 detailing La Guardia's proposed legislation in the context of House of Representatives discussions concerning narcotics trafficking from Istanbul to the United States.¹⁶⁰ This report shows the Turkish state's keen interest in the legislation and suggests that the government gave credence to Anslinger's threat.¹⁶¹ Most significantly, a decree from the Prime Minister's Office in April 1932 labeled "confidential" characterizes La Guardia's prospective legislation as "potentially having extraordinarily harmful impacts on our country's economy."¹⁶² This decree, which bears the signatures of Atatürk and his full cabinet, approves a resolution to join the 1925 Geneva International Opium Convention so as to address the concerns behind the La Guardia's legislation and "put a stop to the waves of false imputations against our country."¹⁶³

The Turkish government made the unprecedented announcement that it would comply with the 1925 Geneva Convention on December 25, 1925. A decree from the Prime Minister's Office on that day frames this monumental decision by stating that President Atatürk "carefully examined the health, economic, and agricultural issues" related to narcotics so as to create a "permanent plan" for the benefit of "all humanity, and the high interests of the [Turkish] nation."¹⁶⁴ Beyond these vague platitudes, however, the decree offers little explanation of the economic, diplomatic, and media forces that propelled this dramatic change. This statement, of

¹⁶⁰ BCA 30.10.0.0.267.801.21 24 February 1932.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² BCA 30.18.1.2.28.32.20 27 April 1932.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ BCA 30.18.1.2.32.80.7 25 December 1932.

course, makes no mention of the Egyptian opiate epidemic that fueled a popular media campaign targeting the public image of the nascent Turkish Republic in region and around the world. Nor does it address how this campaign connected with a broader international diplomatic effort to implement narcotics controls in Turkey. Finally, it gives little sense that Turkey's acceptance of the terms of the 1925 Geneva Convention marked the culmination of systematic multilateral effort that heralded significant shifts in the country's approach to drug control.

Despite these omissions, the document does provide a somewhat clear sense of the form that Turkey's emerging narcotics control regime would assume. In addition to accepting the terms of the 1925 Geneva Convention, the decree states that Turkey will pursue illicit trafficking, ban hashish, and create special courts to adjudicate cases involving clandestine producers and smugglers.¹⁶⁵ However, the most significant change to Turkey's narcotics industry came by way of a plan to "supply products designed for to medical and scientific needs through a *state monopoly*."¹⁶⁶ During the mid 1930s this monopoly would transform the Turkish opiate economy and have a surprising impact on the state's relationship to opium.

The Narcotic Substance Monopoly and the Transformation of the Turkish Opiate Industry

While the Turkish Republic's Narcotic Substance Monopoly (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Uyuşturucu Maddeler İhisiarı or U.M.İ.) emerged out of an effort to control the drug trade in Turkey, moving to monopolize the production of narcotics had significant consequences for the country's economy and institutions. The U.M.İ. intervened in Turkey's lucrative informal opiate industry and, as intended, displaced many of the narcotics manufacturers and traffickers who operated illicitly within the country. However, government control simultaneously placed opium

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

cultivation, refinement, and distribution in the hands Turkish bureaucrats and politicians. The profitability of the trade transformed opiates from illicit substances into commodities that constituted a significant source of revenue during a period of intense financial strain. Although international diplomatic, economic, and popular pressure led the Turkish government to create the U.M.İ., the monopoly also represented and funded Turkey's pivot towards etatism (*devletçilik* in Turkish) and a corresponding increase in investment for state-run industries in response to the poor economic conditions that the country faced during the interwar period.

Severe economic hardship marked the 1920s and 1930s in Turkey. As the country struggled to address the lingering economic impact the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence, the Great Depression led to unfavorable global market conditions that triggered an acute decline in the price of Turkish agricultural commodities and a foreign exchange crisis in Turkey.¹⁶⁷ In response to subsequent increases in popular discontent, the Turkish government embarked on a path of etatism in 1932.¹⁶⁸ Turkey's statist economic policies envisioned the government as the primary producer and investor in national industries and, by 1940, the state played a significant role in the production of iron and steel, textiles, sugar, glass, cement, utilities, mining, as well as opiates.¹⁶⁹ Although economic historian Şevket Pamuk qualifies the initial aims and eventual contributions of the program as "modest," state expenditures rose gradually during the period in which the Turkey implemented statist policies.¹⁷⁰ Created in the early 1930s as a means of helping the Turkish state address international concerns about the opiate trade, the U.M.İ. both exemplifies the country's shift towards etatism and likely funded these policies.

¹⁶⁷ Pamuk notes that Turkish agricultural commodities declined over sixty percent from 1928/29-1933/34. Owen and Pamuk, 16.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 18-20.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 20.

In the years following Turkey's 1932 announcement that it would regulate the opiate trade "through a state monopoly," the U.M.İ. gradually took shape. On June 6, 1933, the Prime Minister's Office appointed former Sanayi Kredi Bankası (Industrial Credit Bank) assistant manager Ali Sami Bey to direct the "newly formed" U.M.İ.¹⁷¹ After Sami's appointment, government documents show that the U.M.İ. acquired a total of 900,000 TL in loans from the Ministry of Finance as well as various state-owned banks including Sümerbank and Ziraat Bankası (Agriculture Bank).¹⁷² These banks played key roles in facilitating statist policies to develop Turkey's textile and mechanized agriculture industries as well as implementing state economic plans.¹⁷³ With their financial support, state documents show that the U.M.İ. quickly took to the task of studying opiate monopolies and markets by sending officials to Iran, where Reza Shah established government control over the opium trade in 1925, and Japan, which emerged as a major distributor of Turkish opiates as early as 1935.¹⁷⁴ Government reports from October 1934 also demonstrate that the U.M.İ. purchased 2.2 kg. of opium poppy seeds from Iran "in order to improve opium agriculture" and that it gained the approval of the state to cultivate opium in seventeen provinces throughout the country.¹⁷⁵ During the early 1930s the U.M.İ. also developed a branding strategy that included a "registered trademark" (*markanın*

¹⁷¹ BCA 30.18.1.2.37.44.7 11 June 1933.

¹⁷² While 8/10/1933 and 11/30/1933 decrees note that the U.M.İ. received 250,000 TL from the Ministry of Finance, 350,000 TL from Ziraat Bankası, and 100,000 TL from Sümerbank, a 1/24/1934 decree simply lists the source of the remaining 200,000 TL as "a national bank" (*bir milli banka*) and does not specify which bank. BCA 30.18.1.2.38.58.4 10 August 1933. BCA 30.18.1.2.41.84.20 30 November 1933. BCA 30.18.1.2.42.4.7 24 January 1934.

¹⁷³ For information on Turkish state-owned banks see: Thomas Marois and Ali Rıza Güngen, "Credibility and Class in the Evolution of Public Banks: The Case of Turkey," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 43, no. 6 (November 1, 2016).

¹⁷⁴ BCA documents from 1935 state that "[r]ecently 10,000 kilos have been sold to Japan." This opium likely ended up on Japanese occupied Manchuria, from which the Japanese sold opium to China. BCA 30.18.1.2.46.43.20 20 June 1934. BCA 490.1.0.0.1454.34.5 11 April 1935. For information on Iran's opium monopoly see Gingeras, 79. For more on opium in China during the 1930s see McAllister, 114-118.

¹⁷⁵ These provinces are as follows: Ankara, Afyonkarahisar, Burdur, Bursa, Bilecek, Denizli, Eskişehir, Isparta, Konya, Kütahya, Amasya, Çerum, Tokat, Malatya, Balıkesir, Manisa, and Aydın. BCA 30.18.1.2.48.66.13 1 October 1934. BCA 30.18.1.2.48.70.11 13 October 1934.

tescili) for the monopoly.¹⁷⁶ This “trademark” combined the Turkish acronym ‘U.M.İ.’ with the national symbols of the crescent moon and star to create a sleek, modern, and professional logo that encapsulated the international political significance of the government narcotics monopoly. Although the U.M.İ. in no way eliminated narcotics refinement and trafficking in Turkey, it replaced the images of the illicit trade in Turkish opiates with a convincing veneer of government control and efficiency.



Figure 12: The symbol for the Turkish Republic Narcotic Substances Monopoly (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Uyuşturucu Maddeler İnhisarı).¹

In addition to its political significance, the U.M.İ. quickly emerged as an important segment of the Turkish economy. As government reports from 1934–1937 demonstrate, opiates constituted a major source of revenue for the Turkish state even during periods when adverse weather negatively impacted opium cultivation. U.M.İ. financial statements from 1934–1935, for

¹⁷⁶ BCA 30.18.1.2.42.3.15 24 January 1934.

example, note that the year's "crop was affected by the cold in some areas."¹⁷⁷ Despite weather-related damage, the documents show that in this period the U.M.İ. purchased approximately 47,639 kilograms of raw opium and sold approximately 39,745 kilograms of opium and processed narcotics for a total of 683,691.88 Turkish Lira (TL).¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, the U.M.İ. maintained a stock of 160,800 kilograms of raw and processed opium that it valued at TL 1,395,541 and total assets (including stocks of narcotics, loans to customers, and physical assets) at TL 3,477,606.76.¹⁷⁹ Together, the U.M.İ.'s reported assets in 1935 represented nearly four times the value of the state's initial TL 900,000 investment in the monopoly in 1934 and suggest the highly lucrative nature of this state-controlled enterprise.

While it remains difficult to assess the importance this industry simply in monetary terms, a 1937 report from Turkish Minister of Finance Fuat Ağrılı to the Prime Minister's Office provides further indication of the opiate trade's significance to the state. In the report Ağrılı argues that the state should build an additional opiate factory in Ankara to address increased manufacturing capacity in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria on the grounds that the opiate industry constitutes an "importance source of foreign currency" for Turkey.¹⁸⁰ Attached to the minister's proposal, a report from the Istanbul branch of the British trading firm J.W. Whittall and Co. LTD. follows Ağrılı's line of logic in arguing that "with time opium [pharmaceutical products] will constitute approximately ten percent of our exports."¹⁸¹ Although both Ağrılı as well as J.W. Whittall and Co. likely overestimated the relative importance of opiates to the Turkish economy for the sake of making their argument, their statements, nonetheless, underscore the significant

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ BCA 30.10.0.0.178.230.10 10 February 1937.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

impact of the trade and, thus, the role of the U.M.İ. in helping the Turkish government balance foreign trade.

U.M.İ. financial statements also suggest that the Turkish government used the lucrative monopoly to balance the state budget. Under a section of the U.M.İ's February 1935 financial report titled "Administrative Tasks," for example, it states that "as our capital this year was *not* placed in our budget...in order for the new crop [of raw opium] to be purchased, we are in financial need."¹⁸² Echoing the previous month's statement, a section of the U.M.İ.'s March 1935 financial report labeled "Needs" complains that "[o]ur capital was once again not received [by us] and, as [the interest] on our loans is gradually being capitalized, for the new crop [of raw opium] to be purchased, we are in need of financial support."¹⁸³ While neither document gives any indication how or for what purpose the Turkish government used the U.M.İ. capital, they do demonstrate that the profits from the opiate trade constituted an important source of revenue for the state during this period of intense economic strain and increased expenditures on statist economic policies.

Throughout the 1930s the Turkish government's relationship to the opiate trade changed significantly. Originally conceived of as a strategy to address the international campaign for Turkish narcotics control, the creation of the U.M.İ. transformed Turkey's opiate trade from an informal nuisance into a formal institution. Similar to other state-owned industries in 1930s Turkey, the U.M.İ. came into existence during a period of dire economic hardship and increased statist policies, which shaped the trajectory and structure of the institution. Within the framework of the U.M.İ, opiates themselves changed from illicit substances into commodities that constituted an important part of state revenues. In this way, the U.M.İ. demonstrates the complex

¹⁸² BCA 490.1.0.0.1454.34.5 11 April 1935.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

history of the seemingly straightforward relationship between opiates and institutional development in interwar Turkey.

Chapter Conclusion

The relationship between narcotics and the Turkish state changed dramatically during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In response to the opiate epidemic in Egypt, the Egyptian government joined an international diplomatic, economic, and popular media campaign to implement narcotics controls in Turkey. This campaign effected significant policy shifts that transformed Turkey's opiate industry. Responding to international pressure, Turkey introduced regulations and created an official government monopoly to control the opiate trade in the model of other emerging Turkish state industries. The U.M.İ., contrary to the country's previous concerns about the impact of the narcotics control on its national economy, emerged as an important source of revenue for the Turkish state during the interwar period.

In demonstrating the far-reaching and somewhat counterintuitive impacts of the interwar opiate trade and the Egyptian epidemic on Turkey, this chapter highlights the complex relationship between narcotics and state development in the country. Contrary to Egypt, Turkey directly benefited from the opiate trade between the two countries. However, the U.M.İ., the instrument that the Turkish state used to control the country's opiate industry and its profits, emerged as a response to the same processes of sale and suppression that contributed to the development of drug enforcement and public health infrastructure in interwar Egypt. These processes demonstrate a dynamic in which both commercial and regulatory forces shape institutional development and, therefore, they incorporate traffickers along with politicians, diplomats, and bureaucrats into the narrative state building in early Republican Turkey.

Conclusion

Throughout the interwar era, tons of heroin, morphine, codeine, and numerous other opium-based derivatives, flowed across the Eastern Mediterranean from Turkey to Egypt. On their way from the poppy fields of Afyonkarahisar to the apartments and shanties of Cairo, these drugs passed through diverse hands. Farmers, merchants, chemists, traffickers, dealers, consumers, police, bureaucrats, politicians, diplomats, and, as *al-Kashkul's* irreverent caricature implies, even presidents participated directly or indirectly in the regional opiate economy during the interwar period. Due to the trade's wide reach and lucrative nature, opiates also had profound social, political, economic, and institutional impacts on the Eastern Mediterranean region as a whole and the countries of Turkey and Egypt in particular.

In Egypt the interwar opiate trade created a variety of social problems as well as economic and political opportunities. Although generally absent from accounts of the trade, opiate trafficking allowed Egyptians to establish profitable networks that helped them relieve the devastating impact of 1929 economic crisis. In addition to illicit economic activity, the government response to the ensuing opiate epidemic provided opportunities for Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians to overcome the semi-colonial Egyptian state's policies of fiscal austerity, construct enforcement institutions like the CNIB, and deliver public health services that addressed drug use and addiction. While these trafficking networks and government institutions had conflicting agendas, they developed in conjunction and together shaped the process of state-building in early twentieth century Egypt.

The interwar opiate trade and the Egyptian epidemic also had an immense impact on the politics, economy, and institutions of early Republican Turkey. While histories of interwar drug diplomacy tend to privilege American and European actors, Egypt greatly contributed to the international efforts that led to the implementation of Turkey's 1930s drug regulations regime. This process turned Turkey's opiate industry into an official government monopoly and transformed the state's relationship to narcotics. As a result of these changes, opiates grew into a major source of state funds during a period when global market forces and emerging statist policies simultaneously created revenue shortages and increased expenditures respectively.

In bringing together the histories interwar Egypt and Turkey, this research explores the relationship between commodity markets and state building in the Eastern Mediterranean. Incorporating the perspectives of Turkish and Egyptian traffickers, dealers, consumers, bureaucrats, diplomats, and politicians into the history of the interwar opiate trade and the subsequent epidemic in Egypt, these histories supplement the current paradigm of commodity-funded state-building with nuanced and indirect models of institutional development. The history of the opiate trade and epidemic in Egypt, for example, exposes a dynamic in which commodities themselves did not fund state-building. Instead, debates over the sale and suppression of opiates shaped negotiations between factions within the semi-colonial state regarding the future of institutional development in the country. Contrary to Egypt, Turkey directly profited from the sale of opiates. However, the institution through which the Turkish state controlled this trade grew out of the same currents of commerce and regulation that contributed to the development of narcotics enforcement and public health infrastructure in interwar Egypt. In examining the complex relationship between the sale and suppression of opiates and institutional development in Egypt and Turkey, this research weaves together the

lives of politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats, traffickers, dealers, and addicts, demonstrating their individual and collective impact in shaping the trajectory of state-building in the interwar Eastern Mediterranean from the bottom up.

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